

NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM MANUAL

September 1994

**Department of the Navy, Bureau of Naval Personnel
Navy Family Ombudsman Program, Pers-662
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IN REPLY REFER TO

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MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

Subj: NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN MANUAL, NAVPERS #15571A

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 1750.1D

Encl: (1) Navy Family Ombudsman Manual, NAVPERS #15571A

1. The Navy Family Ombudsman Program was created on 14 September 1970 with the issuance of Z-gram 24. In its continuing evolution the program has progressed to meet the changing needs of today's Navy and its families. With the release of the 1994 manual, enclosure (1), we further explain the ombudsman program for commanding officers, Family Service Centers, and ombudsmen. This manual is also intended to give commanding officers the information necessary to support the ombudsman program appropriately. A copy of this manual is to be furnished to each command ombudsman for the duration of his/her period of appointment.

2. Training facilitators or commanders may request additional copies from:

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Philadelphia, PA 19120

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "M. S. DEBIEN", is located to the left of the typed name.

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Captain, U.S. Navy
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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

The conceptual roots of the program are found in nineteenth century Scandinavia, when Ombudsman positions were established to give ordinary private citizens access to express their concerns to high government officials. Always accessible, the ombudsman acted as a troubleshooter, advocate, intercessor, and interpreter.

The ombudsman concept was first adapted for the United States Navy by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Elmo Zumwalt in Z-gram 24 issued in 1970. Originally the ombudsman was elected by the wives' club. In 1973 this was changed by OPNAVINST 1750.1, which established that the ombudsman was to be appointed by the commanding officer.

In 1974 a logo was designed to symbolize the key elements of the ombudsman program. The map of the United States superimposed over the map of Sweden indicates the country of origin from which we modified and adapted the program to meet the needs of the families of the United States Navy. The lightning bolt stresses the importance of rapid communication between the commander, the ombudsmen, and the families. The twenty-four stars symbolize Z-gram 24, which originated the program.

OPNAVINST 1750.1 series has shifted the focus of the program away from the grievance-processing role and expanded its scope to identify the ombudsman as an appropriate person to assist the commanding officers in their responsibilities for the morale and welfare of the families of the command. In general, any functions that promote these goals may be included in the ombudsman program. Nevertheless, it is the commanding officer who will determine the content and priorities of that command program.

The ombudsman program has evolved through time just as the Navy and its concern for Navy families has changed. Ombudsmen are better trained today, more professional in the execution of their duties, and incorporated as full members of the commanding officer's team. This double flexibility to evolve with the Navy and to adapt to the uniqueness of each command is a source of strength that allows the ombudsman program to successfully fulfill its mission.

OVERVIEW OF OPNAVINST 1750.1D

OPNAVINST 1750.1D is the governing instruction for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program. The following highlights critical concepts and authorization within the instruction for the CO's rapid review.

The instruction is a complete revision and should be carefully reviewed in its entirety.

Enclosure (1) outlines the Navy Family Ombudsman guidelines.

Section A presents the background and intent of the program, emphasizing the legal basis for using volunteers and indicating Navy Wifeline Association as an excellent resource.

Section B sets forth a code of ethics for the ombudsman.

Section C clarifies selection procedure guidelines including eligibility and qualifications.

Section D outlines Commanding Officer responsibilities within the ombudsman program. It extends the provisions of the instruction to apply to all active-duty and Naval Reserve commands and/or units. It emphasizes that ombudsmen are provided a letter of appointment and a command roster, and are supported via command appropriated funds (OPTAR) and/or nonappropriated (NAF) funds at the discretion of the commanding officer. It clarifies administrative support including regular meetings, training requirements, use of official mail, and recognition.

Section E outlines ombudsman roles and functions within the ombudsman program.

Section F defines confidentiality within the ombudsman program.

Section G provides guidance to base/area commanders, Family Service Center Ombudsman Coordinators, and ombudsman assemblies for implementation and management of training.

Section H gives guidance to base/area commanders on the establishment and functions of ombudsman assemblies and their advisory boards.

Enclosure (2) is the guidance for the Ombudsman Quality Management Board (OQMB) as a Navywide advisory board for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

Membership of the OQMB shall include, but not be limited to: the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager; Chaplain Advisor (Pers-6/66 Chaplain); the two Navy-wide Ombudsmen-at-Large; ombudsman representatives from Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, Chief of Naval Education and Training, Commander Naval Recruiting Command, and Commander, Naval Reserve Force; at least one commanding officer (from any claimancy/community); two fleet/force master chiefs; and others appointed by Pers-6 as necessary; reference (c) applies.

The functions of the OQMB can include advising the BUPERS Ombudsman Program Manager as appropriate, reviewing and recommending revision of pertinent instructions and manuals, and perhaps most importantly, providing suggestions to improve the standardization and support of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program worldwide.

Basic standardization of terminology, definitions, and job descriptions within the ombudsman program is essential. The OQMB will serve to continuously review the program to meet the needs of the everchanging force.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations
Washington DC 20350-2000

OPNAVINST 1750.1D
Pers-662
27 June 1994

OPNAV INSTRUCTION 1750.1D

From: Chief of Naval Operations
To: All Ships and Stations (less Marine Corps field addressees not having Navy personnel attached)

Subj: NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Ref: (a) U.S. Navy Regulations 1990
(b) OPNAVINST 3120.32C
(c) Navy Family Ombudsman Manual NAVPERS 15571
(d) Title 10 U.S.C., Chapter 81, Section 1588 (Acceptance of Voluntary Services for Family Support Programs)
(e) Title 5 U.S.C., Subsection 552a (Privacy Act of 1974)
(f) OPNAV Notice 5211, 18 March 1993
(g) Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide
(h) OPNAVINST 5218.7A
(i) SECNAVINST 1752.3
(j) OPNAVINST 5350.4B
(k) OPNAVINST 1754.1A
(l) Joint Federal Travel Regulations, Chapter 6, Volume II

Encl: (1) Navy Family Ombudsman Program Guidelines
(2) Ombudsman Quality Management Board (OQMB) Guidelines

1. Purpose. To update policy and procedures for the implementation of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program and Command Family Ombudsman Programs. References (a) through (l) apply. This instruction is a complete revision and should be reviewed in its entirety.

2. Cancellation. OPNAVINST 1750.1C.

3. Discussion. The morale, health, welfare and efficiency of command personnel is the absolute responsibility of the commanding officer as defined in references (a) and (b). Inherent within this charge is the responsibility for the morale, health and welfare of command families. The command family

ombudsman assists the commanding officer in carrying out this responsibility.

4. Applicability. The provisions of this instruction apply to all active duty and Naval Reserve commands and/or units.

5. Action

a. The Chief of Naval Operations shall appoint two Navy-wide Ombudsmen-at-Large: spouse of the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (when appropriate); and, Chairman, Navy Wifeline Association.

b. Commanding officers and/or officers in charge shall designate a command family ombudsman. The Navy Family Ombudsman Program shall function per enclosure (1).

c. The Chief of Naval Personnel (Pers-00) through the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personal Readiness and Community Support (Pers-6) shall establish the Ombudsman Quality Management Board (OQMB) to function as an advisory board for standardization and support of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program. Guidelines for the OQMB are provided in enclosure (2).

R. J. ZLATOPER
Deputy Chief of Naval Operations
(Manpower and Personnel)

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NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM GUIDELINESSECTION AINTRODUCTION

1. Navy family ombudsmen have proven to be valuable assets in facilitating communication between commanding officers and family members, fostering a better understanding of the needs and viewpoints of Navy members and their families and providing information and assistance to family members within the command.
2. The commanding officer selects the command family ombudsman. The ombudsman represents and reports directly to the commanding officer and works with the internal chain of command as directed by the commanding officer.
3. Reference (d), providing a legal basis for ombudsmen and volunteers who are associated with military family support programs, authorizes coverage for these volunteers with workers compensation insurance and protects them from liability under the Federal Tort Claims Act.
4. The Navy Family Ombudsman Program and Family Service Centers are complementary programs. Ombudsmen reach out to individual command family members. Family Service Centers are a resource for ombudsmen in carrying out their responsibilities and offer support to ombudsmen in such areas as, but not limited to: coordination of ombudsman training, establishment of ombudsman support groups, provision of resources and information when individual family problems are presented to the ombudsman, assistance to commands in the effective use and recognition of ombudsmen, and maintenance of area ombudsman rosters.
5. Navy Wifeline Association volunteers perform many of the same functions as command family ombudsmen in that they provide a vital communication link between the Navy institution and service members and their families. While serving in this capacity, Wifeline volunteers are entitled to official mail privileges and other administrative support as appropriate.
6. September 14 (or the preceding Friday if the 14th falls on a weekend), is designated as Ombudsman Appreciation Day. This is the anniversary date of the founding of the Navy Family Ombudsman

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Program in 1970 and has been designated as a special day to recognize the contributions of the volunteer ombudsmen.

SECTION B

CODE OF ETHICS

A Navy family ombudsman shall:

1. Support the command's mission.
2. Work within the chain of command as directed.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Maintain the highest standards of professionalism.

SECTION C

SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT GUIDELINES

1. The commanding officer shall determine the number of ombudsmen required based on command needs. Naval Reserve Activities supporting Selected Reserve (SELRES) Units are to assign an adequate number of ombudsmen to meet all active and SELRES family requirements. It is not necessary to have a separate ombudsman for each SELRES unit.

a. Eligibility. Candidates for command family ombudsman must be the spouse of an active duty or Selected Reserve member within the command.

b. Qualifications

(1) Ombudsmen candidates should have the following attributes: maturity, judgment, discretion, reliability and a positive attitude.

(2) Ombudsmen candidates should understand and support the Navy and command programs/policies.

(3) Ombudsmen candidates must have the time, dedication and commitment to be a command family ombudsman.

2. An ombudsman position description shall be published.

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3. Interested command spouses shall be invited to apply for the position by submitting resumes and/or applications. Prior to submitting a resume/application, the effect on the family, of being an ombudsman, must be considered. The commitment of one's time, whether it be for meetings, training or telephone calls into the night, is extensive. As in many endeavors, a supportive family can positively impact the success of any ombudsman.

4. The commanding officer shall establish a screening committee to interview candidates.

a. Screening committee membership may include the executive officer, command master chief, chaplain, current ombudsman, and/or other appropriate persons.

b. The screening committee makes recommendations to the commanding officer for final selection of the command family ombudsman.

5. Upon appointment, the commanding officer will present the ombudsman with command name tag and Navy Family Ombudsman Pin.

6. The commanding officer shall issue an official letter appointing the ombudsman. A copy of the letter should be provided to the type commander, Family Service Center Ombudsman Coordinator, ombudsman assembly/advisory board, Navy Wifeline Association and other appropriate organizations.

7. Prior to a change of command, the incumbent ombudsman will submit a letter of resignation. At the incoming commanding officer's discretion, the ombudsman may be retained and/or a new or additional ombudsmen may be selected.

SECTION D

COMMANDING OFFICER ACTIONS

Commanding officers shall:

1. Ensure that the command family ombudsman receives a copy of this instruction and reference (c).

2. Furnish the ombudsman with a letter of introduction to facilities/programs of other agencies/military services as needed.

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3. Provide the command family ombudsman with a roster containing pertinent information needed for the performance of official duties. The extent of the information to be provided is at the discretion of the commanding officer and can include service member's name, social security number, home address and telephone number; and name, home address and telephone number for their spouse or point of contact (e.g., other family member or family care provider). References (e) and (f) provide for the release of this information to the ombudsman without the consent of the individuals listed when the ombudsman is acting in an official capacity. Commands are encouraged to update this roster regularly.

4. Work with appointee to develop scope of ombudsman program to meet command needs.

5. Discuss terms of appointment, probationary period (if any), and length of appointment.

6. Provide support for the Command Family Ombudsman Program as command resources permit.

a. Program expenses. A telephone answering machine should be provided for the command family ombudsman's use. Supplies/support items such as paper, envelopes, pens, copier service, clerical assistance, computers, use of government phones and command telephone credit cards, and government vehicle transportation should be budgeted and may be provided through appropriated or nonappropriated funds as command resources permit.

b. Reimbursable expenses. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993 Conference Report provides authorization for use of appropriated or nonappropriated funds in support of ombudsmen. Section 345 states "Use of appropriated funds for expenses relating to certain voluntary services. Section 1588(c) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking out "may only be made from nonappropriated funds" in the third sentence and inserting in lieu thereof "may be made from appropriated or nonappropriated funds."

"...This Senate amendment contained a provision (sec. 620) that would authorize the use of appropriated funds for the reimbursement of incidental expenses which are incurred by a person providing voluntary services as an ombudsman or family center volunteer."

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Section 345 and reference (d) provide for reimbursement of personal expenses incurred during performance of ombudsman duties when appropriate. The commanding officer shall determine which expenses are eligible for reimbursement, funding levels and whether command appropriated funds, nonappropriated funds, or other funding sources such as donations from spouse clubs should be used. Reimbursement shall be available on an equitable basis for all command family ombudsmen. Ombudsmen must submit receipts for reimbursement to the commanding officer or a designated representative. Reimbursement is limited to the following specific items:

(1) Child care. Reimbursement not to exceed the local rate of the Navy Child Development Center. Reimbursement for child care expenses for ombudsmen does not change established Child Development Center usage priorities.

(2) Mileage, parking and tolls. Reimbursement for mileage will be at the government privately owned vehicle (POV) rate. Mileage should be documented in order to claim reimbursement. Parking and toll reimbursement requires presentation of receipts.

(3) Incidental expenses. Reimbursement for incidental expenses (e.g. individual appreciation dinners, awards, refreshments), not to exceed \$25.00 per ombudsman, per event, are authorized at the discretion of the commanding officer and may be made from appropriated or nonappropriated funds.

(4) Telephone calls. Reimbursement of toll calls not covered by command telephone credit cards may be made upon presentation of invoice.

(5) Training expenses. Training is essential to ensure that command family ombudsmen can perform functions described in this instruction. Ombudsman training should be planned and budgeted for and can be provided through appropriated or nonappropriated funds at the discretion of the commanding officer. Training is outlined in Section G and reference (g).

7. Allow use of official mail as authorized in reference (i). Mailings must carry the return address of the command and not the personal address of the ombudsman. A command Familygram or other informational mailings may be used to announce command-sponsored activities and provide other official U.S. government information of importance to service members and their families. Information concerning voluntary organizations (e.g., spouse clubs) may be

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included if it supports morale, health and welfare of command personnel and their families and does not violate any of the restrictions placed on the use of official mail by reference (i).

a. Commanding officers should apply the following guidelines in determining whether the content of newsletters is official:

(1) information related to unit mission and readiness, including family readiness;

(2) information which is educational in nature, designed to promote informed self-reliant servicemembers and families;

(3) information regarding servicemembers and families which promotes unit cohesion and helps strengthen the ongoing esprit among family members within the unit;

b. Information regarding private organizations, fund raisers, and commercial ventures is expressly prohibited.

8. Promote understanding and visibility of the command family ombudsman position within the command by continued support and publicity.

9. Facilitate routine communications between the executive officer, fleet/force/command master chief, chaplain, Family Service Center and the command family ombudsman so that ombudsmen may carry out their responsibilities to command families.

10. Ensure the ombudsman understands the specific areas of information in which notification of the commanding officer is mandatory.

11. For deploying units, agree on regularly scheduled meetings when in port and upon method of communication when deployed.

12. Establish procedures whereby the ombudsman can function and be supported when the unit is deployed.

13. Recognize the contributions of the command family ombudsman at appropriate times such as Ombudsman Appreciation Day and at the conclusion of their appointment.

Enclosure (1)

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SECTION EOMBUDSMAN ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

1. The command family ombudsman shall fulfill the following roles:
 - a. Serve as the primary link/liaison between command families and the command.
 - b. Serve as the primary communicator of information between the command and command families.
2. The command family ombudsman shall perform the following functions:
 - a. Communicate regularly with command families. Such efforts might include, but are not limited to:
 - (1) the development of a regular command-approved newsletter or contribution to the existing command or base newsletter of an ombudsman column on matters of interest to command families (reference (c) applies).
 - (2) the establishment and regular use of a command sponsored telephone "Careline" for periodic information flow.
 - (3) the establishment of a phone tree for dissemination of immediate or emergency information, when directed by the commanding officer.
 - b. Provide information and outreach to command family members. Interact and cooperate with organizations and military departments such as, but not limited to: Family Service Centers, chaplain's office, medical treatment facilities, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, American Red Cross, Navy Wifeline Association and legal assistance offices. These organizations are valuable resources in obtaining assistance for command family members.
 - c. Refer individuals in need of professional assistance to appropriate resources. Ombudsmen may provide support to individuals and refer them for counseling. Counseling shall not be provided by ombudsmen. Counseling may be provided only by qualified clinicians.

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d. Act as an advocate for command family members. Ombudsmen, by using their knowledge of the system, can help access the appropriate level of chain of command for intervention and for the forwarding of appropriate requests/grievances while exercising confidentiality.

3. In addition to responding to command family needs, the commanding officer may direct the ombudsman to:

a. Participate in indoctrination and orientation programs for new command members to describe ombudsman functions and available family support programs.

b. Assist in organizing and implementing a welcome program and/or act as a family coordinator as part of the command Sponsor Program.

c. Represent the command on committees, boards, and working groups in the military or civilian communities concerned with services and support to command families.

d. Participate in activities, as directed by the commanding officer, which would promote the morale, health and welfare of command families.

4. Command ombudsmen shall organize, maintain, and update all records concerning their ombudsman responsibilities and resources. Records will be maintained in such a way as to expedite a smooth turnover to future ombudsmen.

5. The ombudsman will, as directed by the commanding officer, establish a close working relationship with the Command Family Support Team to promote the welfare of command families. For purposes of the ombudsman program, the Command Family Support Team is defined as the commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, ombudsmen and others designated by the commanding officer.

6. The ombudsman's responsibilities do not include social duties (e.g., these duties are often assumed by a formal or informal spouse club/family support group). However, announcements of social events which promote the morale, health and welfare of command families may be included in the ombudsman newsletter.

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SECTION FCONFIDENTIALITY

1. While most information coming to the attention of the ombudsman will be routine in nature, some situations will warrant the attention of the commanding officer. Upon appointment, the commanding officer will notify the ombudsman of those areas in which he/she wishes to be kept informed.

2. Some information received by the ombudsman will be sensitive in nature. It is important that confidentiality be maintained in order to protect the privacy of those involved. For purposes of the Ombudsman Program, confidential information is defined by the commanding officer as sensitive information about a service member or family member that is kept within the system for official use only and is relayed only on a need-to-know basis.

a. Confidentiality is required of the ombudsman with regard to the personal privacy of those seeking assistance.

b. A breach of confidentiality on the part of an ombudsman is cause for relief from the position, as determined by the commanding officer.

3. In certain situations, it is necessary to report specific cases to appropriate agencies. For cases that must be reported, the ombudsman will advise the commanding officer or a designated representative, and will contact the appropriate referral resource (e.g., medical treatment facility, Child Protective Services, Family Advocacy Representative, etc.) or coordinate with the Family Service Center staff to make a referral for professional assistance. The following are examples of situations requiring immediate referral:

a. Potential suicide situations.

b. Suspected and established child abuse/neglect, as required by law in all states and by the Family Advocacy Program in reference (i), must be reported to the Family Advocacy Representative. In the absence of the Family Advocacy Representative, report to the Family Service Center or directly to the civilian police or local social service agency.

c. Known incidents of spouse abuse must be reported to the Family Advocacy Representative or to the Family Service Center. Inform the family member that the information will be relayed to

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the Family Advocacy Representative who will provide further advice and/or assistance. Advise the family member regarding counseling services available from or through the Family Advocacy Representative and other sources, and that a shelter or safe house can be located if needed.

d. Drug or alcohol abuse as described in reference (j).

e. Potential homicides, violence or life-endangering situations.

4. In those situations where specific cases must be reported to appropriate agencies, the ombudsman will inform the individual that the information will not be protected.

a. The ombudsman will tell the individuals concerned that informing the appropriate agency/individual about their situation is in their best interest and is the best way to obtain professional help.

b. Ombudsmen will be trained to determine appropriate agencies/individuals to be informed. The ombudsman will communicate the relevant information in such cases only to the appropriate agencies/individuals.

5. Any written personal information kept by the ombudsman on family members should be destroyed prior to turnover of administrative files. Any family member requiring special assistance may be brought to the attention of the commanding officer who, in his/her discretion, may inform the incoming ombudsman.

6. The ombudsman shall adhere to the strictest code of confidentiality as defined by their commanding officer in order to protect the privacy of individuals and to maintain the credibility of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

SECTION G

OMBUDSMAN TRAINING

1. Ombudsman training is essential for the effective operation of the program. Training and support for command family ombudsmen will be provided through Family Service Centers per references (c), (g) and (k). Family Service Centers will include Reserve ombudsmen in training evolutions when appropriate and provide them information and referral support.

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2. Under the direction of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager (Pers-662), ombudsman training has been standardized to include:

a. Basic Training. Standardized Basic Navy Family Ombudsman Training will be provided to all ombudsmen as outlined in the Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide (references (c) and (g) apply). Commanding officers should ensure that their ombudsmen receives basic training. Whenever possible, an ombudsman shall have basic training prior to assuming responsibilities of the command family ombudsman position.

b. Advanced Training. Standardized Advanced Training will be provided to all ombudsmen as per reference (c) and (g).

c. On-going Training. Ombudsmen should continue to be trained throughout the duration of their appointment. This can be accomplished through appropriate on-going training which may include Navy-sponsored training such as Navy Information School, Total Quality Leadership, Personal Responsibilities, Values, Education and Training program (PREVENT), as well as Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Training, other seminars and workshops provided through Family Service Centers and local assemblies.

3. In locations where training is not available, commands may issue invitational travel orders as authorized in reference (1) to enable ombudsmen to obtain training at other installations.

4. In areas where Family Service Center services are not available, local assemblies may be tasked with standardizing ombudsmen training. Commands who need assistance should contact the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager (Pers-662) for advice/referral on appropriate training resources.

SECTION H

OMBUDSMEN ASSEMBLIES

1. Base commanders/commanding officers and/or area coordinators where appropriate, and in support of tenant commands, shall establish a Navy Family Ombudsman Assembly and shall appoint an assembly chair/coordinator for the purposes of providing information and support to the area ombudsmen.

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2. To maintain consistency and standardization throughout the Navy, the term ombudsman assembly is designated as the official title for this ombudsman organization.

3. The functions of the ombudsman assembly may include:

a. Act as a resource for ongoing ombudsman training by providing information on topics of interest to the ombudsman community.

b. Serving as liaison for policy discussion and clarification by appropriate local authorities (e.g., NEX, Commissary, Morale, Welfare and Recreation, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Armed Services YMCA, etc., representatives) with regard to items of interest to area ombudsmen.

c. Assistance to commands for recognition and appreciation of all command ombudsmen. Competitions that recognize the accomplishments of an individual ombudsman rather than promote the importance of the total Navy Family Ombudsman Program are inappropriate (references (c) and (g) apply).

d. Maintenance of a current roster of local assembly ombudsmen, with official verification through the filing of a copy of the command letter of appointment with the assembly. A letter of termination from the command is needed to remove the ombudsman from this roster.

e. Other functions as directed by the assembly's sponsor, such as providing area resource handbooks, publishing regular newsletters, providing minutes of assembly meetings, maintaining a calendar of events, and providing other informational materials to members of the assembly.

4. Recommended guidelines for organizing a local assembly:

a. The sponsoring command is defined as the base commander/commanding officer and/or area coordinator who calls the assembly into being and takes responsibility for the assembly.

b. The sponsoring command has the authority, based upon the needs of the area, to determine the appropriate makeup and membership of its assembly. All appointed ombudsmen of member commands, however, shall be invited to participate in assembly activities.

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c. Assembly leadership (selected and appointed by the sponsoring command) should include: chair/coordinator, advisor/advisory board, and ombudsman representatives. Appointment for a specified term shall be in writing.

d. The chair/coordinator should be the spouse of an active duty servicemember, does not have to be an active ombudsman currently serving a command, but should have appropriate experience for the position.

e. The advisor/advisory board may consist of the spouse of a senior military member, a chaplain, a command master chief, ombudsman representation from the assembly, an action officer from the sponsor's staff, and any other interested and appropriately positioned person(s).

f. The advisory board may be charged with program planning, preparing, and regularly updating the roster and other duties as assigned.

g. The action officer from the sponsor's staff shall ensure the assembly and advisory board have the support they need, including materials and clerical assistance, to perform their duties.

h. The sponsoring command is encouraged to have a local ombudsman assembly instruction (this shall preclude the need for local by-laws) and forward a copy for reference as appropriate to the OQMB, via the BUPERS Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662.

5. In addition, the following clarifications are made:

a. The assembly is not a policy-making body and in no way should interfere with the individual command/ombudsman relationship.

b. The assembly may make recommendations on community matters which affect the well-being of the area families, but, as a group, may not petition or actively or aggressively protest command-initiated action or policy.

c. Assemblies are information sharing organizations and not organized as social clubs; therefore they shall not establish or maintain treasuries or collect dues for the purpose of sponsoring assembly social activities (reference (c) applies).

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OMBUDSMAN QUALITY MANAGEMENT BOARD GUIDELINES

1. The Ombudsman Quality Management Board (OQMB) shall meet at the direction of the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personal Readiness and Community Support (Pers-6).
2. Membership of the OQMB shall include: the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager; Chaplain Advisor (Pers-6/66 Chaplain); the two Navy-wide Ombudsmen-at-Large; ombudsman representatives from Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, Chief of Naval Education and Training, Commander Naval Recruiting Command, and Commander, Naval Reserve Force; at least one commanding officer (from any claimancy/community); two fleet/force master chiefs; and others appointed by Pers-6 as necessary; reference (c) applies.
3. Functions of the OQMB include:
 - a. Provide input and feedback regarding the operation of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program to the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personal Readiness and Community Support (Pers-6).
 - b. Review/recommend revisions to pertinent instructions and manuals.
 - c. Provide recommendations to improve support and standardization of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program worldwide.

Enclosure (2)

COMMAND SECTION

COMMAND SECTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The sacrifices required of Navy families are substantial. In order to maintain readiness, the Navy must have high standards and retain well trained people. In order to retain the experienced and productive service members, the family life associated with the service must be supported and enhanced as much as possible. In 1970, Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt recognized these issues and concerns that are unique to Navy families. In response to these issues he helped to establish the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

Since its inception the ombudsman program has undergone continuous evolution and has adapted to the changing needs of Navy commands and their families. The ombudsman has become a vital resource to assist the command in discharging the commanding officer's responsibilities for the morale and welfare of the families in the command.

The Command Family Ombudsman Program belongs to the command and is shaped to a great extent by the commanding officer's perceptions of the needs of his/her command. The ombudsman is appointed by and works under the guidance of the commanding officer, who determines the priorities of the program, the roles and relationships of those involved in it, and the type and level of support it will receive. The effectiveness of the command ombudsman program in serving the needs of the command and its families is greatly influenced by these decisions.

USING THE COMMAND SECTION

This section has been written explicitly for the commanding officer (CO) and the executive officer (XO) with specialized sections for the command master chief (CMC) and the chaplain. Sections are also included for the spouses of the CO, XO, and CMC as well as a reference to spouse clubs/support groups.

These include suggestions gleaned from practical experience in the field and specific steps that can be taken to guide and support the ombudsman in assuming a place as an effective member of the command team.

THE COMMAND FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

The command family ombudsman is appointed by, reports to, and represents the commanding officer, thus, a command ombudsman program will be only as effective as the commanding officer makes it.

The major factors determining program effectiveness are:

- The functions the commanding officer assigns the ombudsman coupled with clear direction.
- The mutual expectations and communication established between the commanding officer and the ombudsman.
- The amount of support, visibility, and encouragement the commanding officer gives the ombudsman.
- Positive guidance the commanding officer gives the ombudsman regarding relationships with other key positions in the command.
- Mutual adherence of confidentiality and courtesy in all commanding officer/ombudsman relationships.

The benefits obtained from an effective ombudsman program include:

- A sensitive, accurate source of information between commands and families.
- An effective, well trained information and referral service.
- A careline/infoline providing appropriate and timely command information.
- A positive spokesperson and role model for family members.

A Liaison Between the Service Members' Families and the Command

The ombudsman is the link between the command and the Navy family. In broad terms, the Navy family is made up of all active-duty Navy members, including single and married service members, their family members, the service member's parents, siblings, and others at the discretion of the commanding officer. This is especially true in deploying commands where the ombudsman is the primary point of contact between the families at home and the command during deployment.

As a liaison, the ombudsman can perform the following duties:

- Keep the commanding officer informed regarding the general morale, health, and welfare of the command families.
- Function as a trained member of the command team that takes care of families.

As a primary point of contact, the ombudsman can perform the following duties:

- Disseminate official information to the families.
- Let the families know that the command is concerned about them, cares about their well-being, and will respect their desire for confidentiality.
- Educate families on how the successful operation of the command affects them.

FUNCTIONS OF THE OMBUDSMAN

*The Navy family
is made up of all
active-duty members,
including single
and married
service members,
their family members,
the service member's
parents, siblings,
and others at the
discretion of the
commanding officer.*

REGULAR COMMUNICATION WITH THE FAMILIES

The ombudsman is, above all, a source of information. Methods of communication include:

- Regular meetings with the commanding officer and others in the command.
- A regular newsletter.
- A phone tree that can reach all families quickly.
- Availability by phone to respond to an emergency, listen sympathetically, or refer as necessary.
- Participation in pre-deployment, homecoming and homeport change briefings.
- Carelines/infolines as deemed necessary.

The ombudsman's role as a source of information is twofold: to keep the families informed and to assist the families when needed. Experience from incidents such as the USS Stark, USS Iowa, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and the evacuations of the Philippines and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have shown that the ombudsman can provide an effective rapid communications network to bring appropriate, timely information from the command to the families in a crisis. That same quick communication can be invaluable in a mobilization of a shore command or reserve unit, or in the event of a natural disaster.

The Navy has established a number of programs to assist the families of its personnel. The ombudsman has been trained to know when to provide information, when to be a referral source, and how to be receptive to family members when they call.

Information

Ombudsmen provide information on family programs, community resources, pertinent local and base phone numbers, and ship's movements and arrival times when released by the command.

Referral

The ombudsman knows the roles of the Family Service Center, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, American Red Cross, chaplains, etc., and when and how to refer families for appropriate assistance.

Advocacy

The ombudsman assists in using knowledge of the system to access the appropriate level of the chain of command for intervention and the forwarding of appropriate grievances using confidentiality.

For the purposes of the ombudsman program, confidential information is defined by the commanding officer as sensitive information about a service member or his/her family that is kept within the system for official use only and is relayed only on a need-to-know basis.

Additional Programs and Activities

The ombudsman may be directed by the commanding officer to participate in any activity that promotes the welfare and morale of the families.

These activities might include:

- Participating in the planning of deployment support activities (pre-deployment, deployment, return/reunion).
- A welcome program for families and single personnel reporting to the command.
- Representing the command on committees, boards, and groups concerned with the services and support of the families, as time permits.
- Receiving and disseminating information updates during deployment.
- Source of emergency and crisis information.
- Participating in the indoctrination and orientation of new command personnel/families.
- Participating in the sponsor program for incoming personnel.
- Participating in the area ombudsman assembly.

The ombudsman is not a social director and should be excluded from organizing social activities for the command.

The ombudsman may however:

- Be a supporter of command-sponsored groups and activities.
- Be a resource person for information and referral to any group.
- Advertise support group/spouse club activities as permitted by the commanding officer.

Almost as important as having an ombudsman for the command is having support groups/spouse clubs to meet the social needs of the command families. Because of the many duties of the ombudsman, commands should have someone other than the ombudsman be responsible for the social activities. However, in the absence of spouse clubs/support groups, any activity or service that promotes the welfare of the command families may be included in the ombudsman program, at the discretion of the commanding officer.

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE COMMAND FAMILY OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

*The ombudsman
should not be an
active-duty
member of the
command.*

By instruction, the ombudsman shall be the spouse of an active-duty or selected reserve member of the command. This means that a wide range of spouses in the command could take on ombudsman responsibilities if selected—from an officer's spouse to the most junior seaman's spouse. The commanding officer/command master chief spouses should act as advisors, not as ombudsmen. Usually, the ideal person is someone who is experienced enough to be helpful, but not too removed from the younger members of the command. The right personality can transcend all barriers.

As outlined in the instruction, the ombudsman shall not be an active-duty member of the command. In the rare event that the ombudsman acts as an advocate for the command families, it must be done in an impartial manner. An active-duty person is always representing the command and not the families. The ombudsman must be able to do both impartially and needs to be viewed by the families as "one of them" in order to remain approachable and functional.

SELECTING AN OMBUDSMAN

This is perhaps the single most important decision that a commanding officer will make about the ombudsman program. The ombudsman is an important resource to the command, and this selection process is an opportunity for you to choose those individuals who will best represent you and serve the command's families. The time and effort put into making a good decision will have a large payoff later. In fact, the selection of the right type of person is so important that, if a suitable candidate is not found, you may wish to consider postponing the appointment until a qualified person can be located. The wrong person in the job can be worse than no person in the job.

This is the time to set the tone for the entire program. By proceeding as you would in hiring any key employee, you announce that the ombudsman position is important and that you are seeking competent, motivated candidates.

GENERALIZED PUBLIC SEARCH

Advertise the position at quarters and in the command's POD, write a personal letter from the commanding officer to all command spouses, or include a letter in the existing ombudsman newsletter, stating the duties and qualifications. Asking for a resume underlines the professional nature of the position but might frighten away some qualified applicants. It may be best to request rather than require one. *(The ombudsman section has a guide on preparing a resume to assist applicants.)*

Where To Look for Candidates

Individual recommendations may come from:

- Former ombudsmen.
- Chief petty officers, command master chief, chaplain, and executive officer.
- Commanding officer's, executive officer's, and command master chief's spouses and other spouses who have been active in the command.
- Written professional recommendation.

Who To Look For

Don't expect to find someone who meets all of the criteria listed. Look for potential. Maturity and experience are essential. A good ombudsman will grow into the position.

Personal Qualities

- An ombudsman must have the time and energy to do this job; careful thought should be given before appointing someone who works or goes to school full time—especially if that person will be the command's only ombudsman.
- Someone you can work with closely, trust, and respect, and in whose judgment you have confidence.
- Someone who can maintain confidentiality.
- A team player, outgoing, friendly, self-confident, a "do-er."
- Intelligent, caring, a good listener, a good communicator, able to work well with other people.
- Patient, flexible, mature, stable.
- Appropriately motivated.
- A good role model, someone who will be credible with the spouses and the command.
- Someone who is positive about the Navy and the command.
- Someone who will have the support and cooperation of the active-duty spouse or selected reserve spouse.
- A positive, optimistic person.

Experience

- Spouse of a member of the command.
- Navy-life experience, including deployments.
- A basic understanding of major Navy helping resources.
- Prior volunteer experience.

Who To Avoid

- Candidates who cannot maintain confidentiality.
- Candidates who have had severe personal problems, especially those who have been referred to Navy or civilian services for child or spouse abuse. Evaluating the family's situation could serve to eliminate inappropriate candidates. It is recommended that the commanding officer ask the candidates about any personal referrals they may have had for family advocacy problems.
- Candidates who volunteer in order to advance their spouse's career or for status and power.
- Candidates who have not demonstrated overall support for the goals of the Navy, or for command programs or policies.
- Candidates that are not open-minded to new ideas and procedures.
- Candidates whose service member spouses are experiencing professional difficulty. An ombudsman should not be expected to support the command when adverse action is being taken against his/her spouse.
- A complainer.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

***Per OPNAVINST
1750.1D: For
purposes of the
ombudsman program,
the command family
support team is
defined as the
CO, XO, CMC,
ombudsman, and
others designated
by the CO.***

Consultation

Whoever you designate as part of your command family support team (executive officer, command master chief, chaplain, your spouse, their spouses) should be able to work well with the ombudsman and could be included in the selection process so that you can consider their point of view before making your decision.

Screening

If there are many candidates, you may want to delegate the screening to those who will be working closely with the ombudsman. Screening can be done via resumes, application letters, preliminary interviews, etc.

The Selection Interview

This is your opportunity to ensure finding someone competent with whom you can work closely.

- You may want to conduct this alone or with the others who will be involved with the ombudsman program.
- Given the time commitment and amount of family support the ombudsman will need, it is important that the candidate's family is in agreement with the appointment.

Preparing the Candidates

Portions of the ombudsman section of this manual could be given to prospective candidates to prepare them to fully participate in the selection process.

APPOINTING THE OMBUDSMAN

It is with your appointment letter that the ombudsman is first officially given his/her duties and presented to the command. The way in which the ombudsman is introduced will be interpreted as reflecting the value you place on the program and thus will influence his/her credibility with the command and the families.

The appointment process includes:

- Sending the ombudsman an official letter of appointment on command letterhead, outlining the responsibilities. Previous ombudsman's name and date of termination should be included in the letter of appointment.
- Forwarding the appointment letter to appropriate local organizations to identify your new ombudsman. This will vary by location, but usually includes: the type commander, the Navy Family Service Center Ombudsman Program Coordinator, the Navy Wifeline Association, the ombudsman assembly chairman/advisory board, and other organizations as appropriate.
- Introducing the new ombudsman to all the key members of your command. Presentation to division and department heads will increase his/her visibility and reputation as being approachable, as well as emphasizing your support of the program.
- Setting an appointment with the ombudsman to discuss in detail your priorities and expectations concerning the program and performance. Use this meeting to provide guidance on how you wish the program to be implemented, your expectations regarding confidentiality, your ombudsman's continuing education, attendance at ombudsman assembly meetings, and the schedule for future meetings with you and other key personnel within the command.
- Designating a point of contact (e.g., the XO or CMC) to assist the ombudsman with day-to-day concerns or administrative needs (ombudsman newsletter printing/mailing, financial reimbursement, advice, etc.).
- Presenting the ombudsman with a command name tag and ombudsman pin.
- Providing for basic training through the local Navy Family Service Center.

When the appointment letter is sent to The Navy Wifeline Association, the ombudsman will be added to the Ombudsman Journal's mailing list. The Journal is an excellent resource of information on the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

SAMPLE APPOINTMENT LETTER



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY COMMAND LETTERHEAD

Date

Mrs. Mary Brown
12345 Seaside Way
Anytown, Anystate 12345

Dear Mrs. Brown:

After careful consideration of the command family support team's recommendation and based on our personal interview, I am pleased to appoint you to the position of USS Eversail Command Family Ombudsman.

The role of ombudsman is multifaceted. An ombudsman must be prepared for any type of situation that might arise. It is imperative that you attend Ombudsman Basic Training as soon as possible. Mrs. Helen Miller is the Ombudsman Program Coordinator at the Navy Family Service Center. She will be able to provide you with dates and times of the next available training.

Your command point of contact for routine matters is my Executive Officer, CDR Ralph Edwards. He can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Your official command address is:

Mrs. Mary Brown
Command Family Ombudsman
USS Eversail
FPO, AE XXXXX-XXXX

Please use this address when mailing or receiving any mail in your official position as command family ombudsman.

I would like to meet with you to discuss my expectations of how you, as my ombudsman, will interact with our command and its families. During our meeting, we will discuss many important issues. I will define the rules of confidentiality, administrative support, your ombudsman budget, your continuing education, and attendance at ombudsman assembly meetings. At the meeting, we will set up a schedule for future meetings between you and me as well as with other key personnel in the command. Please prepare any questions that you may have for me so that we can thoroughly discuss them. Please contact my office upon receipt of this letter so that we may arrange a meeting at your earliest convenience.

The USS Eversail Command Family Ombudsman Program is extremely important to me. As ombudsman you are a vital link between me, this command, its service members, and its families. I congratulate you on your appointment and appreciate your contribution to the command and the United States Navy.

Sincerely,

Commanding Officer

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

Trial Periods

In appointing an ombudsman (especially one serving for the first time), a trial period allows each party to judge the other and the work involved on the basis of actual on-the-job experience. It also provides a graceful exit to either side if things do not work out; 6 months for a new, 3 months for an experienced ombudsman are reasonable time periods.

Term of Office

Although there is no established term of office for an ombudsman, a short-term appointment (e.g., one year subject to renewal) is recommended (deployment cycles should be taken into account). This option, too, would leave a graceful out for both parties.

The ombudsman term of office automatically expires:

1. *upon PCS transfer of the command member*
2. *upon retirement or discharge of the command member*
3. *at the change of command*

OMBUDSMAN APPRECIATION DAY

September 14 (or the preceding Friday if the 14th falls on a weekend) is designated as Ombudsman Appreciation Day. This is the anniversary date of the founding of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program in 1970 and has been designated as a special day to recognize the contributions of the volunteer ombudsman.

CHANGING OMBUDSMEN

It is extremely important that a commanding officer be satisfied with the ombudsman. The effectiveness of the program is based upon close, trusting, and candid communications. Although there has been hesitation in the past to “fire” an ombudsman because of the volunteer status, it is important that a commanding officer treat the ombudsman as any subordinate. This may involve telling him/her that the job isn’t being done well or even terminating the appointment. It is a disservice to the command, the program, and the ombudsman in question to retain someone who is unsatisfactory.

There are three situations in which changing an ombudsman should be considered:

- *Unsatisfactory performance or working relationship with the commanding officer*

There may be a situation that requires immediate dismissal of the ombudsman such as a serious breach of confidentiality or command security, continual inaccessibility to command families, inability to do the job, polarizing families, or unwillingness to participate in ongoing training. Any event that seriously erodes the commanding officer’s confidence and trust in the ombudsman is sufficient grounds for his/her replacement and should be done as the situation dictates. Remember that a commanding officer has a responsibility to the command and the ombudsman has a responsibility to be cooperative, respect confidentiality, and act ethically.

- *At a change in command*

Usually there is an incumbent ombudsman when a commanding officer takes over a new command. The new commanding officer should be briefed about the performance of the ombudsman and a recommendation made about retention. Unless there are reasons for dismissal, it is generally more convenient to retain the incumbent, who should be informed of this in writing. A trial period or a short renewal appointment are options. The instruction requires that the ombudsman submit a letter of resignation prior to the change of command which may also express a willingness to continue to serve (if that is indeed the case) at the pleasure of the new commanding officer.

- *Evidence of ombudsman burnout*

Burnout is an occupational hazard for ombudsmen. Working to the point of burnout is not only detrimental to the ombudsman and his/her family but reduces the ombudsman's effectiveness and ability to serve the command families. Should a commanding officer become aware of burnout in the ombudsman, and should the ombudsman be unable to take the appropriate measures to resolve the burnout, then dismissal from duty—either a temporary suspension or termination—may be an appropriate consideration. This is a supportive rather than a punitive measure and should be done with appropriate command appreciation.

LETTER OF TERMINATION

A letter of termination is required if the ombudsman's spouse has transferred or retired, or if the ombudsman is dismissed or otherwise terminated. A copy of this letter should be forwarded to the type commander, Family Service Center Ombudsman Coordinator, Navy Wifeline Association, ombudsman assembly, and others as appropriate. If this is in conjunction with the appointment of a new ombudsman, one letter officially appointing the incoming ombudsman and terminating the outgoing ombudsman is appropriate.

OMBUDSMAN TURNOVER

While all ombudsman administrative supplies, equipment and files are the property of the command, it is impractical for the outgoing ombudsman to turn everything back to the command. Administrative supplies, equipment, and resource lists that do not fall under the rules of confidentiality may be given directly to the incoming ombudsman once the appointment has been made. The ombudsman's current resource file is indispensable for giving helpful information and making appropriate referrals. The resource files require a major effort to establish and maintain and should be passed on intact to the incoming ombudsman to allow for instant assumption of duties. While outgoing ombudsmen are encouraged to assist incoming ombudsmen with suggestions and general information about their command, they must brief and turn over any personal ongoing case files, and the ombudsman's command roster, command telephone credit card, and telephone tree directly to you prior to leaving their position. You will then decide whether the incoming ombudsman should have a command telephone credit card and the turnover files, telephone tree, etc. It is your responsibility to supply the incoming ombudsman with the most updated roster. Outgoing ombudsmen should never brief an incoming ombudsman without your express permission.

ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES FOR THE OMBUDSMAN

The single greatest stumbling block encountered by ombudsmen is the lack of clear direction as to what the command expects. An ombudsman who attends the Ombudsman Training Academy, Advanced Training, and Ongoing Trainings is well versed in OPNAVINST 1750.1D, the ombudsman manual, and how the program is intended to work. The ombudsman also knows that ultimately it is the commanding officer's decision as to how the program will work in that command.

Communicating clear expectations to the ombudsman is the key to getting off to a good start. This will provide the ombudsman with essential guidance, ensure that the program functions as you wish it to, and prevent any misunderstandings and/or conflicts at a later date. Treat your ombudsman just as you would any member of your management team by telling him/her just what you expect. Soon after the appointment, set a meeting to discuss these expectations in detail. You may want to invite the others who will be working closely with the program (e.g., XO, CMC, chaplain, your spouse) for part or all of the meeting.

Suggested items to cover in this meeting include:

Your Priorities

There may be certain issues, programs, or activities that are of more value to you; the ombudsman needs to know this so that his/her efforts reflect these priorities.

Keeping You Informed

There may be some matters that you want to be personally informed of either on an as-happens basis or during regular meetings. Now is the time to determine the information you want and how you want to receive it. Clarify the things you need to know and the boundaries of the confidentiality within which you expect the ombudsman to work.

Confidentiality

OPNAVINST 1750.1D states "while most information coming to the attention of the ombudsman will be routine in nature, some situations will warrant the attention of the commanding officer." Upon appointment, the commanding officer will notify the ombudsman of those areas in which he/she wishes to be kept informed. When you are establishing guidelines for a new ombudsman, it is up to you to determine how these few areas are defined within your command. Confidentiality is a hot topic with ombudsmen. It is extremely confusing and should be thoroughly defined. Close attention needs to be paid to coordination of working relationships between ombudsmen, commanding officer/executive officer spouses, and confidentiality issues. As a rule, ombudsmen should not be expected to report each and every phone call, such as information and referral calls. However, they should know the types of calls that you want to be informed of and the reasons you need to be informed. Basic ombudsman training addresses confidentiality issues. Ombudsmen should attend Basic Training as soon as possible following their appointment.

The Commanding Officer's Spouse's Role

Commanding officers' spouses may be involved in the ombudsman program to differing degrees; it is important to clarify with your spouse and the ombudsman what that role will be. The roles and relationships should be made clear and understood by all parties. Rather than assuming the coordination will occur, the commanding officer shall assure that discussion and clarification with the ombudsman and the commanding officer's spouse take place.

In most situations, it can be understood that a commanding officer's spouse may be covered by workers compensation insurance and protected from liability under the Federal Tort Claims Act when the commanding officer has determined that the spouse is acting in an official volunteer capacity as ombudsman advisor for the command families.

However, if the commanding officer's spouse chooses to take on responsibilities without the knowledge and discussion of the command, it can no longer be assured that he/she is acting in his/her official capacity and, therefore, he/she may not be protected by that same coverage.

Regular Meetings

Regularly scheduled meetings with the ombudsman are a command responsibility.

Establish a pattern of regular meetings with the ombudsman—ideally monthly, at your convenience. As with any department head, regular contact allows feedback to you on the status of your program and on the morale of the service members and their families.

Delegating all contact will lead to the perception that the program has low priority. This will lessen its effectiveness, and compromise confidentiality.

Point of Contact (POC)

Choosing the right point of contact is as important to the success of the program as choosing the right ombudsman.

Naming a POC for routine matters allows the ombudsman to conduct business without having to disturb you except for those matters of special concern or importance. The executive officer or senior enlisted advisor is often the best person to play this role. Those individuals chosen to provide this support need to be specifically tasked to do so. The ombudsman's spouse would not serve in this capacity.

POC and Support During Deployment

During deployment it is especially crucial that the ombudsman know where to go for financial and administrative support and who the military POC will be (i.e., sister ship representative, ISIC (Immediate Superior in the Chain of Command) POC, Shore detachment POC). It is the commanding officer's responsibility to make arrangements before deployment for the provision of this support. This should be arranged through the most appropriate source within the chain of command.

The support to be provided is specified in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. It is also important to establish how you will communicate with the ombudsman (telephone calls, IMARSAT (International Maritime Satellite Network), overseas calls, naval messages, letters) for both routine and emergency matters, including a definition of what constitutes an emergency and, again, the boundaries of confidentiality within which you expect the ombudsman to work.

Develop guidance for unexpected events that might occur during the deployment, including potential natural disasters, so the ombudsman clearly understands your policy.

Cellular Phones and Beepers

While it is important for command families to know that they can contact their ombudsman when they need to, commands should give careful consideration to the issue of whether their ombudsman really needs a cellular phone or beeper. Only on rare occasions might an ombudsman be needed by the command for an emergency of that magnitude. The ombudsman's primary functions are as a communicator and an information and referral resource. It is important that commands appreciate and respect the limits of the ombudsman and his/her duties and not task him/her beyond what should be expected.

International Maritime Satellite Network

Clear guidance needs to be established on the use of the IMARSAT system, to avoid abuse of this very expensive communications tool. An ombudsman's first reaction to a situation may be to call the command. It is much more appropriate for the ombudsman, instead of making an IMARSAT call to the command, to call the command POC or ISIC. Once the trained professional has done an initial investigation, a hard-copy followup message can then be sent to the command, providing them with the appropriate information to make an educated determination of necessary actions. The Navy should not turn to an ombudsman to manage an emergency. Ombudsmen are volunteers whose role is to refer families in crisis to professionals and then stand by to offer support and assistance. The command should help the ombudsman to learn how to refer families in crisis to the appropriate emergency professionals for the proper assistance that a Navy family deserves.

Careline

When a person agrees to be an ombudsman, part of that agreement is to use his/her personal telephone number to assist the families of the command. When command resources permit, commands may install a dedicated phone line (which may be in the ombudsman's home) that has an answering machine or voice mail which plays a recorded informational message (SITREP). This message is accessible 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Both the separate line and answering machine/voice mail are command-provided and may be paid for by appropriated or non-appropriated funds. They may not be employed for personal use.

Newsletters

One of the primary roles of the command ombudsman is that of communicator. In this role, it is critical that strong and direct lines of communication be opened, maintained, and strengthened. One of the best ways to keep information flowing is to produce an ombudsman newsletter.

The command ombudsman serves as a primary point of contact between you, the families of your command, and the Navy community. By ensuring a consistent and accurate flow of information, your ombudsman can fulfill a major responsibility—getting the right information to the right people at the right time.

What Will the Newsletter Accomplish?

- Transmitting information from the command to the family members in a timely manner.
- Informing family members of community and Navy services and resources that are available to them.
- Keeping family members informed of news of common interest (activities, special events, announcements).
- Expressing the command's interest in improving the morale and welfare of its family members.
- Encouraging, inspiring and uplifting the family members.

Benefits to the Ombudsman

- Reduces the number of phone calls he/she receives.
- Reduces rumors by providing all families with firsthand, accurate information.
- Allows the ombudsman to reach the greatest number of people at one time.
- Establishes the ombudsman's credibility as a source of information.

Discuss ideas for the newsletter with your ombudsman. Establish guidelines, requirements, restrictions (length, content, frequency, command support, etc.), potential contributions, and your desire for review and approval prior to publication.

From time to time there is concern and confusion by the post office on whether or not ombudsman newsletters qualify as official government mail. As a result of initiatives by both the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy, DoD is in the process of changing the DoD mail manual in regards to the mailing of command-sponsored family newsletters. The most current guidance can be found in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. It states:

"Allow use of official mail as authorized in reference (i). Mailings must carry the return address of the command and not the personal address of the ombudsman. A command Familygram or other informational mailings may be used to announce command-sponsored activities and provide other official U.S. government information of importance to service members and their families. Information concerning voluntary organizations (e.g., spouse clubs) may be included if it supports morale, health and welfare of command personnel and their families and does not violate any of the restrictions placed on the use of official mail by reference (i).

a. Commanding officers should apply the following guidelines in determining whether the content of newsletters is official:

- (1) information related to unit mission and readiness, including family readiness;*
- (2) information which is educational in nature, designed to promote informed self-reliant service members and families;*
- (3) information regarding service members and families which promotes unit cohesion and helps strengthen the ongoing esprit among family members within the unit;*

b. Information regarding private organizations, fund raisers, and commercial ventures is expressly prohibited."

Discuss needed supplies (paper, typewriter and ribbons, printed labels, envelopes or mailers, return address stamp, stapler, etc.) and printing deadlines and procedures. Determine whether your staff will be able to assist in the newsletter production and mailing or whether it would be more appropriate to have family members provide that needed support.

The ship's roster is the ombudsman's list of addresses for mailing newsletters.

If your command is sea-going, identify sources of support and assistance and proper procedures for publishing a newsletter during times of deployment.

Reimbursement

Determine what procedures the ombudsman should follow in order to be reimbursed for authorized expenses. Guidance is provided in OPNAVINST 1750.1D.

Ombudsman Professionalism

Treating the ombudsman like a professional by providing administrative support, regular meetings, listening to and acting on his/her suggestions will engender, in turn, professional behavior and performance.

Effective communication is the key. The ombudsman needs to know what can and cannot be done, what the primary and secondary functions are to be, and limits of his/her authority.

Locally Written Publications

There are times when guides, booklets, or publications may be written in local areas in support of the ombudsman program. While these may be useful tools, any material published must be forwarded to the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager for chop/approval/policy verification PRIOR TO PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION.

Locally written publications in support of the ombudsman program may be excellent tools, but should not be produced or distributed without the Ombudsman Program Manager's chop.

Grievance Procedures

It is important for ombudsmen to know how to channel grievances to the appropriate sources. Every base and every command has a system for addressing problem issues. The individual with a complaint must use these channels first. If these channels do not produce satisfaction and the grievance merits consideration, then the ombudsman may set the wheels of the program into motion. There is never any issue that would require an ombudsman to start at the top of any chain, such as housing, hospital, NEX, PSD, etc. Your ombudsman should consult the command point of contact at the beginning and throughout the process, keeping him/her informed of the grievance actions being taken.

COMMAND EMERGENCIES

These are defined as those crises in which a significant proportion of the command is affected. These situations which differ in terms of the preparation for and management of the crisis are especially important if large numbers of personnel and their families are involved.

Regardless of the kind and extent of the command emergency, the ombudsman is never to act independently or without explicit guidance from the command. The ombudsman should be thoroughly aware of your policies and expectations in the event of a crisis or a natural disaster occurring where the command families live.

The ombudsmen should stay in close communication with the command to lend whatever assistance is requested. If the command is deployed, the ombudsman should be in communication with the assisting squadron or command, ISIC, and the other members of the family support team (commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief spouse, spouse club/support group representative). The Navy Family Service Center that serves the command in crisis will want to work closely with the command ombudsman.

The ombudsmen have been the primary point of contact for all family members. The families have become accustomed to interacting with the ombudsmen of the command and will call them first to verify the extent of any command crisis. To facilitate the prediction of family needs, you may choose to invite the ombudsman to participate in the planning of the command crisis response plan. It would be helpful for the ombudsman to have a copy of the finished product, because he/she should be thoroughly aware of your policies and expectations.

The casualty definition period is the most stressful for the families. The families of the crew (especially the families of the victims) need to be protected/isolated from the press. A place on base is often designated by the command for the families to gather. This location offers the families camaraderie of friends, and ideally serves as the location for the rapid flow of accurate communication from the command and provides security from the press.

The ombudsmen are not to accompany the Casualty Assistance Calls program (CACO) personnel, who are trained to respond appropriately in the event of mass casualty and to handle the official notification of the families.

The ombudsman may have current location and contact telephone numbers which might make the CACO's job of locating and informing the family members easier. The ombudsman should release any requested information to the CACO without question, and should not be informed of the purpose of the contact until after the family member has been appropriately notified.

Keep the Roster Current

The basis for smooth handling of the situation relies on the rapid availability of information. What appears to be a routine or even unnecessary exercise in normal times takes on a critical importance during emergencies. A crucial role of the ombudsman in crisis response is to keep an up-to-date roster of current family locations, liaison as appropriate, and supply the contact information to the command as requested. The ombudsman should maintain a current list of where family members can be reached as information from the command becomes available.

An ombudsman's ability to respond appropriately in a crisis is dependent on an accurate roster.

Another role of the ombudsman is to encourage families to keep their personal paperwork up-to-date and accurate. This includes personal IDs, DEERS enrollment for all family members, the service member's will, SGLI, and pg. 2 information. Reminders of this should occasionally be printed in the newsletters to the families.

What To Do if It Is Your Command in Crisis

The ombudsman's spouse being in danger or possibly becoming a casualty places tremendous emotional stress on the ombudsman, making it difficult to function in the usual manner.

- The command families will be looking to the ombudsman for information and support. They may feel that he/she is their only link to the command and their loved ones.
- All ombudsmen appointed to the command should coordinate their assigned jobs and contact your official POC, who should tell them the exact message that should be placed on your carelines/answering machines. They may be flooded with phone calls from spouses, parents, siblings, significant others of your command's families, and the media.

No News Is Good News

- The ombudsmen of the command need to stay in contact with the commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief/chief of the boat spouses and each other. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the size of the command, and the disaster plan enacted, this group often finds comfort in being together during the time of waiting for confirmation of details.
- Information may be slow coming in the beginning and at other times during the crisis. The ombudsmen should field their calls as much as possible and explain to the family members that they will receive any updated verified information released by the command as soon as possible.
- You may choose to accept ombudsman assistance offered by other commands, especially if the spouse of the ombudsman has been identified as a casualty.

Possible Additional Assistance

As part of crisis intervention you may request the ombudsman to assist with the following:

- Staffing a sheltered place for command families to gather for an extended length of time.
- Provision of meals for families and volunteers.
- Assistance with transportation/lodging of family members arriving from out of town.
- Child care needs. It is recommended that when possible, young children be left in the care of a trusted friend or neighbor during the torturous waiting period. However, flexibility and understanding are the keys to emotional control during these times.
- Coordination of locations for the counselors, chaplains, and other professionals to interact with specific families in privacy.
- Coordination and tracking of large numbers of volunteers who will present themselves and be indispensable.
- Ongoing aftercare: stress management groups, ships' reunion planning, grief seminars, communication with crew, hospitalization and medical/emotional followup, and provision of other needed services.

Natural Disasters

Another form of command emergency you may be faced with is that of a natural disaster (e.g., an earthquake, flood, or hurricane). Once again, advanced planning and clarification of expectations is essential, as well as complete updated rosters of family addresses and contact telephone numbers.

An evaluation of the possible types of disasters that might befall your area will make advanced planning a little easier. In most places, this has already been done in great detail. Navy bases have disaster preparedness plans in place. Some have printed disaster preparedness guides for general distribution to personnel and their families. Ideally, pertinent information from these plans and availability of the guides is widely known, perhaps through the base publication or the ombudsman newsletter. Calm, steady rumor control is also essential.

The command should locate, update, and distribute the local emergency checklist. In the command ombudsman newsletter, the ombudsman may remind the families that a major disaster of almost any kind may interfere with the area's normal supplies of water, food, heat, and other day-to-day necessities. The families should keep on hand, in or around their homes, a stock of emergency supplies sufficient to meet their particular needs for a few days, preferably enough for a week. If an order to evacuate is given emergency supplies should be taken along, especially any medications that may be needed. Emergency shelters are often only that, a place of protection from the elements.

Your local Navy Family Service Center will probably have informational and educational pamphlets about natural disasters.

Emergency bulletins and directions are usually given over the local TV and radio stations. In military housing areas, when time permits, security police may pass warning information via loudspeaker systems.

In the event that the local Navy disaster preparedness plan is put into effect, **the ombudsman should be called and informed of the nature of the disaster and which plan the command has put into effect.** For example: a hurricane is expected to hit the immediate area within a certain timeframe and evacuation of all non-essential personnel has been ordered by the command. There is a specific evacuation route and temporary shelter designated for families of personnel in housing or assigned to a specific base. These emergency shelters will have their own disaster assistance plans in effect. The commanding officer may ask the ombudsman to call the families of the command and **CALMLY** inform them of the evacuation procedures and normal expectations. **Ombudsmen should make as many calls as possible, but should not put themselves in a dangerous position by failing to evacuate themselves and their families within the timeframe recommended by the command!**

The ombudsman may be called upon after a disaster to coordinate some of the relief efforts (e.g., water and food distribution to those needing it the most). You may ask them to do a special mailing with current instructions and support information, including reminders about boiling water, etc., as appropriate.

Recording names, addresses, and contact telephone numbers as they are given to the ombudsman allows you to keep track of where the command's families are going. The ombudsman has been called upon in the past to contact all of the families after the disaster is over, obtain status, and incorporate the information into messages to the deployed units. This contact informs the command of family safety, condition, and current location, which helps to decrease the level of anxiety and concern (panic) among those deployed.

Casualty Assistance Calls Program (CACO)

This program provides a broad range of assistance to the next of kin (NOK) of a Navy service member who is seriously ill/injured, missing, or deceased.

In the case of seriously ill or injured Navy members, notification of the NOK is typically accomplished by telephone. A Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO) is not routinely assigned; however, the Casualty Assistance Branch at the Bureau of Naval Personnel coordinates Government-funded travel of the NOK to the member's bedside, if their presence is deemed warranted by attending medical personnel.

In the event a service member dies or is missing, an active-duty officer or chief petty officer is assigned as a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO) to notify the NOK and to provide followup assistance as necessary. During the initial call upon the family, the CACO is usually accompanied by a chaplain, whose role it is to provide pastoral care and comfort to the grief-stricken family. The notification is always the responsibility of the CACO. **It is not appropriate for the ombudsman to accompany the CACO during the initial visit or to contact the family about a casualty situation prior to official CACO notification.**

SAMPLE INSTRUCTION: OMBUDSMAN DUTIES DURING DISASTER

As part of the services offered, the CACO and the chaplain will offer help from the member's command. If the family desires such assistance, the ombudsman will be contacted to lend support as appropriate and in coordination with the CACO and the chaplain. The family may require assistance such as help with answering the telephone, arranging for child care, shopping for groceries, or arranging for relatives to be met at the airport. These are just a few of the many areas in which the ombudsman can contribute significantly to seeing the family through the most difficult of times.

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ANNEX D COMMAND OMBUDSMEN

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 1750.1B
(b) COMNAVBASENORVAINST 1750.10C

1. General. Reference (a) outlines policy for the Command Family Ombudsman Program and directs Commanding Officers to select an ombudsman, from Navy spouses within their command. It also directs base commanders to establish procedures to assist the area Ombudsmen so they may be most effectively used. These procedures have been established in reference (b). Reference (b) further describes the duties of the Chairman of the Tidewater Ombudsman Assembly, the ombudsman assembly and the organizational framework of the ombudsman assembly.

2. Purpose. The purpose of this Annex is to demonstrate how command ombudsmen will perform their duties during times of disaster and establish a recall procedure to ensure that local ombudsmen are available to assist ombudsmen directly or secondarily affected by the crisis situation.

3. Recall Procedure

a. Immediately following the occurrence of a disaster, the Naval Base Norfolk Command Duty Officer (CDO) will contact the Chairman of the Tidewater Ombudsman Assembly (CTOA) or, if unavailable, the Assistant Chairman (ACTOA). The CTOA or the ACTOA will report to Navy Family Service Center(N), and begin recalling ombudsman assembly members.

b. The official ombudsman roster will be used to recall assembly members, and other key ombudsmen, who will be involved in disaster relief measures. All ombudsmen, the Navy Family Service Center(N), information and referral specialists (444-NAVY), and receptionists at the Navy Family Service Center(N) maintain current copies of this roster. Each member of the ombudsman assembly will be given one page of the ombudsman roster to recall assembly members, as needed. Those members recalled will gather at Navy Family Service Center Norfolk and await further instructions.

c. The CTOA will act as the Chairman of Volunteers for ombudsman actions and will coordinate these volunteer activities with the Navy Family Service Center(N) Volunteer Coordinator to prevent duplication of effort. Close coordination with the Navy Family Service Center(N) Volunteer Coordinator and the Navy Family Service Center(N) Director will be required.

d. The CTOA will advise the Crisis Response Commander (CRC) via the Director, Navy Family Service Center, at the Operations Command Center, on Ombudsman and family matters throughout the duration of the emergency situation.

e. The CTOA will serve as the official spokesperson for command ombudsmen and will interface with the CRC, Public Affairs Officer (PAO) in charge and the Staff Judge Advocate participating in the Command Center prior to meeting with the press.

4. Actions

a. Members of the Tidewater Ombudsman Assembly, under the direction and supervision of the CTOA or designated representative, will provide the following services and resources in support of the ombudsmen and families affected by the mass casualty situation:

(1) Information, support, assistance and comfort for affected Ombudsmen and those Ombudsmen secondarily affected by the crisis. This includes communicating frequently with the affected Ombudsmen to ensure that disaster needs are assessed and appropriate actions expedited.

(2) Assumption of command ombudsman duties should an ombudsman be personally affected by the tragedy and unable to perform her/his official role.

(3) Coordinate direct assistance to disaster victims in assisting next-of-kin in making transportation, lodging and messing arrangements upon request and with the approval of the Casualty Assistance Program Coordinator, (N11, 444-2558).

(4) Watchstanders at designated shelters, assistance centers, and chapels.

Media

To protect the ombudsman (and the families) from the press, the ombudsman should be instructed that all media inquiries or requests for interviews should be declined and referred to the designated command public affairs officer for action or response.

Assembly Meetings and Training

The ombudsman shall attend regularly scheduled assembly meetings and ongoing training.

COMMON QUESTIONS

This is a list of frequently asked questions and issues that should be addressed by commanding officers in order to establish an effective ombudsman program:

- How often will I (the ombudsman) meet with the commanding officer/ executive officer/command master chief?
- Who is to be my point of contact in the chain of command?
- What procedures should I follow to be reimbursed for approved and budgeted expenses?
- Does the command want me to keep written records of contacts?
- What information am I to pass to the commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouse? How will we work together? Have they been informed of this understanding?
- How will I get updated rosters and mailing labels?
- How will I get office supplies for newsletters?
- To whom do I take my newsletter for approval before printing and mailing?
- What is the command policy regarding the content of the newsletter?
- Will spouse clubs and support groups be allowed to submit articles and notices for meetings?
- How should I communicate with the command during deployment?
- Will I have a local POC while the command is deployed?
- Will I be provided a list of telephone numbers to reach the command throughout deployment?
- Do any problems warrant a direct call to the commanding officer at the deployment site?
- Who determines whether a call is an emergency? The ombudsman, the command's local POC, or another POC?
- How do the ombudsman and the command's local POC coordinate so that "the right hand knows what the left hand is doing?" How should we keep each other informed?
- What will the command's local POC's office hours be?

- Will I have a dedicated ombudsman line in my home and will it be an autovon (DSN) line? (If your command is in a fleet-intensive area (such as Norfolk or San Diego) where several commands deploy and may request dedicated telephone lines in ombudsmen homes, the local telephone company may be willing to make special discounted group arrangements with the commands.)
- Will I have an answering machine? Calling card?
- What situations warrant emergency leave?
- Will I be a part of the emergency call tree?
- How shall I deal with the media?
- How shall I work with the Navy Family Service Center?
- How shall I work with co-ombudsmen?

Encouraging ombudsmen's questions and hearing their concerns will enable the commanding officer to establish specific guidelines and at the same time ensure that the ombudsman program is an asset to the command.

PLANNING THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Although their activities are usually dictated by the calls received, ombudsmen find it useful when, at the beginning of their appointed year, they prepare an annual plan of predictable events and expenses (e.g., support group meetings, newsletter publication, babysitting, etc.).

Also, requiring ombudsmen to prepare an annual report allows a review and evaluation of the program at the end of each year.

A concern in structuring the command's ombudsman program is the number of ombudsmen to appoint. The command should appoint as many ombudsmen as necessary, giving them each equal access to the commanding officer. Since the workload is shared, it should be established by the command how the ombudsmen work as a team.

Not only does this ensure better service to the command families, it also allows the ombudsman to occasionally take some time off and won't leave the command without an ombudsman.

There are at least four alternatives for command liaison and dissemination of information:

- Designating one of the ombudsmen in the command as the POC for routine matters.
- Rotating the ombudsman who will serve as the POC.

It is important to be alert to the possibility of competition among ombudsmen and to take steps to try to avoid it.

- Meeting with all ombudsmen together.
- Designating one person as the command ombudsman and designating other ombudsmen with specific responsibilities (e.g., newsletter editor, telephone tree coordinator, etc.).

SUPPORTING THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Although the ombudsman program has the potential for providing enormous benefits to the command and its families, this potential cannot be realized without the active support of the command. Regardless of how dedicated and hard-working an ombudsman may be, without command support the program cannot be entirely effective.

The following subsections describe the major areas of assistance that are needed and suggest strategies for providing that support.

The elements of support that are covered are prescribed in OPNAVINST 1750.1D, and apply to all commands (i.e., shore, air, surface, submarine, recruiting, overseas, and reserve).

Personal Support: Regular Contact

Although the ombudsman will need a POC in the command for routine matters (XOs or CMCs are ideal), regular contact with the commanding officer is still essential for both parties. For the commanding officer, this provides feedback on the families and the service members as well as a general status briefing on the program; for the ombudsman, the fact that he/she merits regular contact from the commanding officer is a visible indication to the entire command that the ombudsman program is taken seriously and should be supported by everyone.

If setting a fixed meeting time is unrealistic, schedule a regular meeting at your discretion. Given that the ombudsman represents the commanding officer, it is important to keep abreast of what he or she is doing. Otherwise, problems can occur.

Provision should be made for channels of emergency contact, both during deployment and in port, as well as for shore commands, especially for those cases the commanding officer has designated as a priority and for those serious matters when the ombudsman needs guidance from the top. Most commanding officers provide the ombudsman with a home number for such cases. Ombudsmen are conscious of the trust this implies and do not abuse this privilege.

The ombudsman needs a resource for personal support, as well as someone to discuss things with confidentially. Command and squadron chaplains can often fill this need and should be requested and encouraged to assume this role. This may need to be initiated by the commanding officer.

VISIBILITY FOR THE OMBUDSMAN

In order for the ombudsman to be contacted for assistance by the families, the ombudsman must be visible. The three factors that affect ombudsman's visibility are:

- Clearly having the support and endorsement of the commanding officer.

- Being known throughout the command by both personnel and their families.
- Having a reputation for being someone who is approachable, who maintains confidentiality, and who is effective.

The command has an important role to play in assuring that the first two factors are positive; to achieve this visibility and endorsement the command can undertake the following:

Official Introduction

- Announce the appointment at quarters.
- Use closed-circuit TV, where available, to make a live introduction.
- Post the ombudsman's picture, name, and telephone number on the command's bulletin board along with a description of the program and its services.
- Invite and introduce the ombudsman to the various messes.
- Invite the ombudsman to tour the command with the command master chief, facilitating introductions to the personnel.
- Publish an article featuring the ombudsman in the newsletter, command familygram, or base newspaper.
- Invite the ombudsman to attend quarters, I-division, or command orientation and to explain their duties and responsibilities.

Introduction by the commanding officer personally insures the ombudsman's credibility.

Certainly the ombudsman needs an introduction to the key representatives in the command with whom he/she will be working. Introduction by the commanding officer personally ensures the ombudsman's credibility.

Official Recognition

- The ombudsman is given an official name tag with the emblem of the command, the title "ombudsman," and his/her name inscribed on it.
- The official ombudsman pin should be obtained through the Navy Uniform Service of the Navy Exchange System. It is usually worn separately from the official name tag, but may be attached.
- Plan of the Day/Week: The ombudsman's name and telephone number can appear regularly in the Plan of the Day.

KEEPING THE OFFICIAL COMMAND ROSTER UPDATED

The roster of all command personnel containing pertinent information needed for the performance of their official duties is the most important, indispensable tool that ombudsmen need to do their job. The extent of the information to be provided is at the discretion of the commanding officer, and can include service member's name, social security number, home address and telephone number, and name, home address, and telephone number for his/her spouse or point of contact (e.g., other family member or family member care provider). Supplying the service member's projected rotation dates (PRD) is also very helpful in keeping the roster current.

Ensuring it is regularly updated is a crucial command support function. In case of emergency, the ombudsman must rely on the accuracy of the roster to contact families of both married and single personnel.

In addition to the specific statement in OPNAVINST 1750.1D that commands will provide an official command roster to ombudsmen, the ombudsman program was added to the Federal Register of Programs in August 1979, excluding the official command roster from restrictions of the Privacy Act by authorizing release to "duly appointed family ombudsmen in the performance of duties related to the assistance of members and their families." See references from the Privacy Act Issuances, 1987 Compilation, Volume III, pp 546 and 547.

There is a distinct difference between the command's official roster and the social roster. Information contained in the official roster cannot be released by the ombudsman to anyone outside the immediate command structure or any organization (e.g., spouse club/support group, advertising agency).

The ombudsman needs to be informed of spouses of personnel who join the command just before or during deployment. They are often the ones who most often need ombudsman referral services. Deployed personnel can be greatly comforted by knowing that their families have a resource to call if need arises. The command's responsibility is to regularly forward the updated roster to the ombudsman, especially during deployment.

It is equally essential for the ombudsmen of shore commands and reserve units to keep rosters updated. Historically, ombudsmen have been called upon during natural disasters and incidents such as Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the evacuations of the Philippines and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to coordinate communications to and from families and to participate in a unique family crisis support system. This cannot be done without an updated roster.

KEEPING THE OMBUDSMAN INFORMED

Communicating the Big Picture

Commanding officers sharing the big picture (the why behind policies and orders) allows ombudsmen to effectively communicate it to the family members of the command so that they understand what is going on. This increases their support and acceptance of the command.

Families become accustomed to interacting with the ombudsman of the command and will call them first to verify the extent of any command crisis. If possible, to facilitate predicted family needs, the ombudsman should participate in the planning of the command crisis response plan, have a copy of the finished product and be thoroughly aware of the commanding officer's policies in the event of such a crisis.

A regular (at least monthly) contact during deployment by letter, message, and calls from port concerning the crew and its activities (e.g., award ceremonies, social events, etc.) allows the ombudsman to include this update in newsletters or tapes and reassure the families that things are going well. Many commands now provide ombudsmen with weekly updates for carelines/infolines to keep families informed.

Two-way communication allows the commanding officer and ombudsman to update one another on specific issues or individual family problems. This facilitates problem solving for both the deployed Navy member and the spouse at home. When possible, the commanding officer should provide the ombudsman with contact phone numbers throughout the deployment. While IMARSAT is available on an emergency basis, ombudsmen should be encouraged to use less expensive forms of communication for routine business.

It cannot be overstated how eagerly news of the deployed command is awaited by the families or how anxiety-provoking its absence can be. Similarly, it is a tremendous relief to the crew member at sea to get word via the command from the ombudsman that all necessary assistance is being provided to his/her family in case of a problem.

KEEPING THE OMBUDSMAN INFORMED DURING DEPLOYMENT

ADMINISTRATIVE AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

The command is authorized to support the command family ombudsman from command appropriated funds (OPTAR) and locally generated non-appropriated funds and/or unit allocations for ombudsman support (OPNAVINST 1750.1D).

Ombudsman support should be carefully planned and budgeted annually. The following are things that can be paid for through appropriated or non-appropriated funds as command resources permit:

Program Expenses

Allowable support items include office supplies, copier service, clerical assistance, answering machines, use of Government telephone and command credit card, preparing/printing of newsletters, working space at the command, Government vehicle transportation, and the use of official mail when the mailings carry the command return address and not the home address of the ombudsman. The commanding officer may give the ombudsman authorization and instructions on placing calls through the Base Autovon Operator from his/her home. These support items should be budgeted and can be provided through command appropriated or non-appropriated funds.

Reimbursable Expenses

Ombudsmen must submit receipts for reimbursement to the commanding officer or a designated representative. Reimbursement is limited to the following five specific items:

1. **Child care** - not to exceed the local rate at the Navy Child Development Center.
2. **Mileage, parking and tolls** - paid at the Government POV rate.
3. **Incidental expenses** - in support of the ombudsman program may be paid for with appropriated or non-appropriated funds **WHEN INCURRED BY THE COMMAND ONLY**. This is at your discretion and can be used for such things as individual ombudsman appreciation dinners, ombudsman plaques, and awards. Refreshments provided for ombudsman meetings, etc. are not to exceed \$25.00 per ombudsman, per event. Ombudsmen may not be reimbursed for incidental expenses. They must plan and budget with the command to ensure their needs and requirements are met.
4. **Telephone toll calls not covered by command telephone credit cards**
5. **Training** - ombudsman training should be planned and budgeted and can be provided through appropriated or non-appropriated funds at the discretion of the commanding officer.

MOTIVATING THE OMBUDSMAN

As with any subordinate, proper motivation can call forth superior performance and dedication in the ombudsman. Some suggestions for rewarding and motivating your ombudsman are listed below.

- Say "thank you" occasionally either in person or in writing.
- Let the ombudsman know when he/she has done a good job.
- Recognize the ombudsman on September 14, Ombudsman Appreciation Day (or the preceding Friday if the 14th falls on a weekend).
- Provide an occasional lunch (on board is especially rewarding) or flowers.
- Provide official recognition at command functions.
- Place an "appreciation ad" in the base newspaper.
- Respect his/her opinion.
- Support the program—especially with your time.
- Present a personally written letter of commendation or certificate of appreciation at the end of service. Blank certificates are available through your local Family Service Center Ombudsman Program Coordinator, Navy Wifeline Association or the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager (Pers-662).

OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLIES

An important element of the ombudsman program is the local ombudsman assembly. Established by the sponsoring command (base commander/commanding officer/area coordinator) in support of tenant commands, the assembly functions only under the supervision and guidance of the sponsor. The functions of the assembly may include:

- Serving as a resource for ombudsman training by providing information on standardized procedures and topics of interest to the ombudsman community.
- Serving as liaison for policy discussion and clarification by appropriate local authorities (e.g., representatives of NEX, Commissary, MWR, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Armed Services YMCA, etc.) in regards to items of interest to ombudsmen.
- Provision of assistance to commands for recognition and appreciation of the area ombudsmen.
- In the absence of a sponsoring Navy Family Service Center, maintenance of a current roster of area ombudsmen, with official verification through the filing of a copy of the letter of appointment with the assembly. The previous ombudsman's name and date of termination should be included in the letter of appointment, which will serve to remove the previous ombudsman from the area roster.
- Other functions as directed by the sponsoring command (e.g., provision of area resource handbooks and materials, publication of regular newsletters, provision of minutes of assembly meetings, and maintenance of a calendar of events).

The ombudsman assemblies are not policy-making bodies and in no way interfere with the individual command/ombudsman relationship.

Assemblies are not policy-making bodies and in no way interfere with the individual command/ombudsman relationship.

The assembly may make recommendations on community matters which affect the well-being of the area command families, but as a group, they may not petition or actively or aggressively protest command-initiated action or policy.

It is strongly recommended that each sponsoring command have a local ombudsman assembly instruction and place it on file for reference as appropriate with the Ombudsman Quality Management Board, and the Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662.

Assemblies are information-sharing groups and not organized as social clubs, therefore shall not establish or maintain treasuries or collect dues for the purpose of sponsoring assembly social activities.

ASSEMBLY ORGANIZATION

Ombudsman assembly elections or any type of popularity contests are inappropriate and are highly discouraged.

Recommended guidelines for organizing a local assembly include:

Chair/Coordinator

The chair/coordinator should be the spouse of an active-duty service member currently serving a command within the sponsor membership. He/she does not have to be an active ombudsman currently serving a command, but should have appropriate experience for the position and be appointed by the sponsoring command.

Often the sponsoring command requests the chair/coordinator represent the sponsoring command on committees, boards, or group meetings as an information and referral liaison. This relationship should be in writing. The sponsoring command appoints the chair/coordinator to any committees deemed appropriate. The chair/coordinator may not volunteer without full concurrence of his/her sponsoring command, and that should be in writing. Committees who would like ombudsman assembly representation should go through the assembly's sponsoring command.

Advisory Boards

The sponsoring command may also appoint an advisory board to support and advise the assembly. The advisory board may consist of the spouse of the senior military member, a chaplain, a CMC, an ombudsman assembly chairman, an action officer from the sponsor's staff, and any other interested and appropriately positioned person(s).

The advisory board may be charged with program planning, preparing and regularly updating the roster, and other duties as assigned.

The action officer from the sponsor's staff shall ensure the assembly and the advisory board have the support they need, including materials and clerical assistance, to perform the requested duties.

Appointments must be for a specified term and shall be in writing. Assembly leadership should be selected and appointed by the sponsoring command; this removes the need for elections/popularity contests that often are destructive and competitive in nature.

Ombudsman Representatives

All appointed ombudsmen of an individual command should be invited to participate in assembly activities.

Assembly-to-Assembly Relationships

In some areas there may be legitimate reasons for the establishment of more than one assembly. For example, areas of large concentrations of deployable commands, (e.g., ships, subs, airwings, etc.) may choose to have ombudsmen meet periodically in separate assemblies (DESRON, SUBRON, or AIRWING assemblies), to talk about issues and concerns unique to their communities.

In addition to DESRON, SUBRON or AIRWING assemblies, a base commander/commanding officer and/or area coordinator, with concurrence from the type commander and appropriate tenant commands in the area, may establish an area assembly made up of all ombudsmen within the geographic location, with the sole purpose of sharing ideas and learning about items that are specific to that geographical location.

Assemblies, however, should not see themselves as hierarchical, or as one assembly with more authority or power over another by perceived importance or by rank of sponsoring command. Remember, by instruction, assemblies have NO AUTHORITY to make policy, dictate, legislate, or in any way interfere with individual local command/ombudsman matters. Clarification of the policy of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program should be addressed to the Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662.

TRAINING FOR THE OMBUDSMAN

Training is a key ingredient in the success of an ombudsman program.

Ombudsman training is important not only for ombudsmen but for other members of the command as well. Commanding officers are given the responsibility in OPNAVINST 1750.1D to ensure that their ombudsman receives Basic Training, if possible, following receipt of the appointment letter and prior to assuming the responsibilities of that position. The participation of the commanding officer, executive officer, and command master chief spouses in the basic level training is welcomed and encouraged. Participation by the command master chief as well as the chaplain can be invaluable for understanding and working with the program. Some areas offer special, short briefings for commanding officers on the program.

For active-duty and reserve ombudsmen, standardized ombudsman training is broken down into three categories:

- ***Basic Training***

Basic Training is required of all ombudsmen; when possible it should be provided prior to assuming the responsibilities of the position. This training encompasses things an ombudsman must know, such as: confidentiality, relationships with command, communicating with families, information and referral, basic deployment support, etc.

- ***Advanced Training***

Advanced Training is required of all ombudsmen. It includes more specific and indepth training provided by subject-matter experts on topics such as Family Advocacy Program (FAP), Crisis Response and Management, Stress/Burnout, Navy Core Values, Team Building/Networking, Telephone Effectiveness, Grief, Suicide, Advocacy, Deployment, (emotional cycle of deployments return and reunion issues), Media and Newsletter/Communication.

The participation of the CO, XO, and CMC spouses in the ombudsman training is welcomed and encouraged.

Participation by the command master chief as well as the chaplain can be invaluable for understanding and working with the program.

• *Ongoing Training*

Ongoing training includes Navy-sponsored training such as a Navy Information School, Total Quality Leadership, PREVENT (Personal Responsibilities, Values, Education and Training Program), as well as Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society training and other seminars and workshops provided through Navy Family Service Centers and local assemblies that include such topics as time management, public speaking, running meetings effectively, etc.

GENERAL TRAINING INFORMATION

In locations where training is not available, commands may issue ombudsmen invitational travel orders (ITOs) to enable ombudsmen to obtain training at other installations. To obtain a list of BUPERS approved training sites/approved trainers, contact the Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662.

Because ombudsmen are volunteers providing a valuable service to the Navy, and because the Navy requires ombudsmen to attend training, it is the Navy's responsibility to ensure that ombudsmen are trained as per their governing instruction. It is the Navy's responsibility to provide up-front travel and per diem costs for those ombudsmen in isolated areas who attend Basic Training or those authorized to travel for the Navy to train others. Commands may issue ITOs as authorized in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. ITOs shall be limited to command ombudsmen, reserve ombudsmen, and recruit ombudsmen from isolated locations to attend the nearest FSC ombudsman Basic Training event for the sole purpose of receiving required basic ombudsman training.

Pers-662 has published the Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide to assist Navy Family Service Centers and councils who conduct ombudsman training.

Although strongly discouraged, in those cases when ombudsmen begin service prior to Basic Training, the ombudsman manual will assist them until they are able to attend ombudsman training academy.

In large areas where there are several assemblies, the Navy Family Service Center should standardize, coordinate, and offer all Basic Training, with each local assembly supplying the local resource information and copies of the local instruction/charter as appropriate.

It should be made clear to all ombudsmen during the interview process that they *will be expected* to obtain not only Basic Training but any Advanced Training that is available in their area.

Attendance at trainings and workshops should be required as an indispensable part of the responsibilities, even for experienced ombudsmen.

Ombudsmen Training Ombudsmen

If your command has more than one ombudsman, it is likely that new appointees will profit from the experience of their colleagues. This sharing can be enhanced by organizing training sessions or a mentoring program. It is important that any intra-command training not replace or conflict with the ombudsman training provided by the Navy Family Service Center or the assembly. For those commands with a single ombudsman, allowing an overlap between outgoing and incoming ombudsmen may contribute to a smoother transition.

Reserve Ombudsman Training

Reserve ombudsman training has been developed to support the unique needs of the Selected Reservist (SELRES) family. Training specifically designed for the reserve ombudsman is available at the Naval Reserve Management School, Naval Support Activity, New Orleans, LA and can be supplemented with ombudsman training academies available through Navy Family Service Centers.

Recruit Ombudsman Training

Recruit ombudsman training has been developed and thoroughly addressed in the COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1B.

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND THE OMBUDSMAN

This section is intended specifically for the executive officer as a key person in determining the effectiveness of the command's ombudsman program. Many commanding officers designate the executive officer as the primary point of contact (POC) for the ombudsman.

Readiness

Service members who know that their families have a reliable person to call in case of problems will be less distracted and more able to concentrate on their job. Family problems tend to be carried into the workplace. An ombudsman, by working with the family towards the resolution of this type of distraction, can make an important contribution to the morale and performance of the crew, enhancing the overall readiness of the command.

Fewer Unauthorized Absences

Knowing the ombudsman is there to help solve problems and emergencies may reduce unauthorized absences. Being better informed of potential problems from the families' perspective may assist the command in prevention and planning.

Rumor Control

The ombudsman's ability to provide clear and accurate information, answer questions, and dispel rumors helps prevent the spreading of rumors, not only among the families but also among the crew.

"Heads Up" on Potential Problems

Candid communications with the ombudsman will keep the command informed of general problems and allow intervention (often informally) before they get out of hand.

Time Saving

The ombudsman's fielding of many of the routine questions that would otherwise take the time of the command can result in real time savings.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN

The effectiveness of the command's ombudsman program will be greatly enhanced by direct executive officer involvement:

- Become familiar with OPNAVINST 1750.1D and the contents of this manual.
- Assist in formulating the command's policies and expectations governing the command's ombudsman program.
- Be involved in the ombudsman selection process.
- When possible, attend ombudsman trainings.
- When possible, attend the local ombudsman assembly meeting with the ombudsman, the command master chief, and others designated by the commanding officer.
- When necessary, clarify procedures for support of the ombudsman (support during deployment, official command roster, funding, mailing, etc.).
- Communicate openly as you would with another team member.
- Respect confidentiality.

The assistance the executive officer provides the ombudsman is invaluable in meeting the needs of command families.

THE COMMAND MASTER CHIEF AND THE OMBUDSMAN

The purpose of this section is to provide suggestions on how to help maximize the support and benefits available to the crew when the command ombudsman and the command master chief work as a team.

Just as the command master chief is charged with helping the commanding officer to care for the welfare and the needs of command personnel, the ombudsman is responsible for helping the commanding officer care for the families of the command. The success of one depends on, and is complimented by, the success of the other. Personnel will inevitably bring on board problems and concerns from home, especially during deployment. When the command master chief and the ombudsman work as a team and cover both the crew and the families, the readiness, retention, and performance of the command will be enhanced.

The potential benefits for the crew from the command master chief/ombudsman team's cooperation are enormous. You each have half of the puzzle; by sharing information, the entire picture can emerge. Working together and presenting a common approach puts both in a stronger position to promote the welfare of the crew and their families. Confidentiality requirements need to be respected in command master chief conversations with the ombudsman.

In addition to those listed in the executive officer section, the command master chief might expect from a successful partnership with the command ombudsman:

- A role in the welcome program for new families to the command and the area.
- A role in the sponsor program in overseas or isolated duty stations.
- An informed resource on local services, facilities, and traditions.
- Opportunities for explaining the command's mission in the ombudsman newsletter.
- A rumor control agent.

The executive officer is often the primary point of contact in ombudsman matters. The command master chief is often the point of contact for the ombudsman for routine, day-to-day matters. Consequently it is also suggested that the command master chief:

- Become familiar with OPNAVINST 1750.1D and the contents of this manual.
- Become informed of what the commanding officer expects from the ombudsman.
- Be involved in the ombudsman selection process.
- Attend ombudsman training.
- Attend the local ombudsman assembly meeting with the ombudsman and the executive officer and others as directed by the commanding officer.
- Assist the ombudsman in seeing the commanding officer regularly.
- Be an advocate of the ombudsman.
- Take every advantage to remind command personnel of the ombudsman and the benefits of the program.
- Ensure that the ombudsman receives logistical support.
- Help the ombudsman understand the chain of command and how to work effectively within it.
- Keep the ombudsman informed.
- When the ombudsman is unable to solve a complaint or problem within the system, provide assistance through your network of contacts in other commands.
- Communicate openly as you would with another team member.
- Respect confidentiality.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE OMBUDSMAN

*The assistance the
CMC provides to the
ombudsman will be
invaluable!*

The assistance the command master chief provides the ombudsman will be invaluable!

CHAPLAINS AND THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Navy chaplains can play an invaluable role in increasing the effectiveness of the command family ombudsman program by:

- Helping the ombudsman to understand and access the chain of command and Navy resources.
- Serving as an advisor and advocate to the ombudsman.
- Being someone to turn to personally and professionally when needed.

BENEFITS OF AN EFFECTIVE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Problem Identification

The ombudsmen, through their regular contact with the families, can help provide early problem identification.

Information and Referral

For those families who may be reluctant to ask for help, the ombudsman can encourage them to reach out to the chaplain or others for assistance.

Information Dissemination

The ombudsman communication network (the newsletter and phone tree) are vehicles through which you can reach command families.

Locate Command Volunteers

Ombudsmen can help locate those individuals who are available to act as volunteers and provide assistance to others.

WORKING WITH THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN

Establish Clear Expectations

Do not assume that the ombudsmen knows what a chaplain does. Provide an explanation of the chaplain's general duties, specific services, and restrictions of your individual faith group. The commanding officer will clarify expectations concerning working relations between the command chaplain and ombudsman. It is recommended that the chaplain participate in the selection process and expectation-setting session.

Be Sensitive to What an Ombudsman Is and Does

Understand that ombudsmen are civilians. Their understanding of and place in the command can be causes of difficulty and frustration for them. Chaplains can be a strong source of clarification and encouragement for ombudsmen.

Serve as the Ombudsman's Consultant

Act as an information resource. Ombudsmen need objective support to clarify situations and review options. Advice will be sought especially when an empathic relationship with the command families and the ombudsman exists.

The invaluable services that you as a chaplain can give to ombudsmen include:

Be Their Ombudsman and Advocate

At times, all ombudsmen need someone to help with their personal or family issues. Regular check-up calls are invaluable for their own stress and feelings.

Serve as a Sounding Board

Professionally, the ombudsman from time to time will need someone with whom to bounce ideas around and explore options. At other times, the need is to try and resolve problems informally before official decisions are made or the command is officially informed. As their consultant, help them stay clear on the balance between "rescuing" or being a para-professional and on knowing when to let go of a situation and make the referral.

Take Ombudsman Training

Something new can be learned with each additional training session.

Encourage Them

Help them to remember that they have an important role in the command. Let them know they are doing a good job and try to ensure the command recognizes their work.

Be an Advocate

Come to the ombudsman's assistance when they have difficulties in operating within the chain of command; help smooth relations with members of the command, their spouses, spouse clubs, and support groups. If the ombudsman is having difficulty in working with someone and doesn't feel comfortable in raising the issue with the commanding officer, the chaplain can often lay the groundwork so that the issue can be brought up and discussed. Respect confidentiality.

Be a Resource Information Guide

A chaplain's knowledge of various services and organizations available for command families can be especially helpful for new ombudsmen in their referral duties until they learn the system. Share these resources openly and freely with ombudsmen.

Be a Referral Source

The chaplain is an important referral source for the ombudsman, especially for specialized services such as: marriage preparation and counseling, grief, dealing with loss, ethical and spiritual guidance, performing the rites and ceremonies of your own faith group, and facilitating the rites and ceremonies requested by adherents of other faith groups.

SUPPORTING OMBUDSMEN

***Knowing that the
chaplain is one
individual with whom
they can speak in
confidence can be a
tremendous support.***

Facilitate an Ombudsman Support Group

Facilitating a support group for ombudsmen (especially during deployment) may be a much-needed service that would allow them an opportunity to network and build support with one another, reduce their stress, learn new skills, and have a chance to air their own complaints and frustrations, channeling them constructively.

Chaplain and Ombudsman Assembly Relationships

Staff chaplains are sometimes asked by sponsoring commands to serve as “chaplain advisors” to ombudsman assemblies/committees.

THE CO/XO/CMC SPOUSE AND THE OMBUDSMAN

The involvement and support of the spouse of the commanding officer, the executive officer, or the command master chief can be an invaluable asset to the ombudsman program. The degree of involvement that any of these will have may differ by command and by personal interest.

Before the program was established in 1970, CO/XO/CMC spouses often performed the same functions as the ombudsman today. Now it is important that the CO/XO/CMC, their spouses, and the ombudsman determine appropriate ways to work together for the benefit of command families. Taking ombudsman training can clarify each of these roles and help create an effective relationship.

POSSIBLE ROLES

The ombudsman program belongs to the commanding officer, and it is the CO's responsibility to establish the various working relationships of those involved.

The ombudsman program belongs to the commanding officer, and it is the commanding officer's responsibility to establish the various working relationships of those involved. The roles and relationships should be made clear and understood by all parties. In a few commands it is the commanding officer's or executive officer's spouse who functions as an “unofficial” ombudsman for the other officers' spouses, or the command master chief's spouse for the other chiefs' spouses. If this is the case in your command, close attention needs to be paid to how this will be coordinated with the ombudsman. Rather than assuming this coordination will occur, the commanding officer shall assure that discussion and clarification with the ombudsman take place.

Everyone working closely with the ombudsman should be invited to participate in the selection process. Once the ombudsman has been selected, it is beneficial that the ombudsman and the commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouses meet to discuss the roles that each have been asked to fulfill by the commanding officer. Establishing clear expectations about meeting frequency, times and methods of being reached, and involvement in the program can prevent misunderstandings and difficulties from arising later.

Possible roles that the commanding officer might ask the commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouses to play include:

Commanding Officer's Liaison With the Ombudsman

Although it is important that the commanding officer meet regularly with the ombudsman, the commanding officer's spouse may be asked to supplement these meetings so that the commanding officer can remain totally informed on matters of particular interest.

Sounding Board for the Ombudsman

Often the ombudsman will need someone to turn to for suggestions or for reaction to their ideas; the commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouses represent a wealth of information and ideas.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality restrictions between the commanding officer's/executive officer's spouse and the ombudsman are often very confusing. The important thing to remember is that the ombudsman must follow the specific guidance relating to confidentiality as defined by the commanding officer. Without specific guidance from the commanding officer, ombudsmen have been instructed to abide by OPNAVINST 1750.1D.

Personal Support and Encouragement

Openness to be called by the ombudsman when they are feeling personally stressed, or contacting the ombudsman regularly to ask how things are going, is essential for maintaining positive relationships.

The secret to making a positive relationship between commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouses and the ombudsman is simple: establish good communications and clear expectations about everyone's role and functions.

SPOUSE CLUBS/SUPPORT GROUPS AND THE OMBUDSMAN

Spouse clubs and support groups are vital in helping to meet the needs of the command families. Because of the many duties of the ombudsman, commands should have someone other than the ombudsman be responsible for these social activities. In the absence of spouse clubs/support groups, any activity or service that promotes the welfare of command families may be included in the ombudsman program, at the discretion of the commanding officer.

Support Groups

Support groups range from informal to more formal organizations of spouses within the command. All command support groups, informal or formal, **MUST** be endorsed by the commanding officer.

When support groups are started, it is important to be clear about the expectations of the members. These groups can meet social needs for camaraderie, companionship, up-to-date information, and serve as a forum to relieve loneliness and stress during unit separations within an undemanding setting. Support groups are usually more active when the command deploys. Once the unit returns, the support group may diminish the number of get-togethers or activities. In any case, the group is fulfilling its purpose as long as the members are happy with it.

A support group usually requires no dues or formal elected positions. If a committee is required, members volunteer as needed. In some support groups, the members have decided to have a chairman or co-chairmen, responsible for scheduling events, etc. Remember, all support group activities, both official and unofficial, **MUST BE ENDORSED** by the commanding officer.

The Ombudsman's Role

The Navy Wifeline Association's booklet Guidelines for Launching Clubs and Support Groups and Robert's Rules of Order are valuable tools for organizing and maintaining a support group or spouse club.

If the ombudsman is requested by the commanding officer to start a support group, it is recommended that another person be designated as soon as possible to continue the coordination of the group events, etc. The ombudsman should be an active participant in the support group, but because of his/her full-time commitment to the command as ombudsman, should not hold a leadership position. Remember, perception is reality. Once the ombudsman has been appointed, people will assume when he/she attends various meetings that the ombudsman is acting on the behalf of the command or in his/her official capacity.

The command-sponsored support group which is willing to arrange meetings and other social events is a tremendous help to the ombudsman, especially during deployments. The support group leader can ask the ombudsman for speaker referrals and program suggestions and can make all of the necessary arrangements, leaving the ombudsman free to continue normal duties. The ombudsman can advertise the events in the newsletter, with reservations being taken by the appropriate support group member. Working together they can meet most of the families' needs, without either one becoming overwhelmed with duties and expectations.

Spouse Clubs

A spouse club is similar to a support group but functions under more structured guidelines.

A formal club must have the commanding officer's approval for formation, membership requirements, election of officers, and a definite structure as specified in a constitution and bylaws. The constitution, bylaws, and membership requirements should have the CO's approval after scrutiny by the command legal officer.

The Ombudsman's Role

- May be a supporter of command-sponsored groups and activities.
- May be a resource person for information and referral to any group.
- May advertise support group/spouse club activities as permitted by the commanding officer.
- Should not be a social director or assume the duties of a spouse club/support group leader.

OMBUDSMAN SECTION

OMBUDSMAN SECTION

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The role of ombudsman is a unique opportunity for a Navy spouse. The ombudsman is part of the Command Family Support Team and is an official volunteer in the command. The ombudsman program belongs to each command and the ombudsman represents the commanding officer in everything he/she does in that role. The ombudsman reflects the commanding officer's policies and works within the guidelines the commanding officer sets. The commanding officer is the boss and the ombudsman reports to him/her. It is important for the ombudsman to become as thoroughly familiar as possible with Navy ranks, rates, and terminology, different types of Naval commands, and appropriate family support resources.

Because each command differs, there is no single job description that would fit all ombudsmen. Although there are certain general functions that every ombudsman will perform, the exact nature of the program will differ from command to command. The size and type of command, the commanding officer's priorities, and other factors affect the role of the ombudsman and the way in which the program will be structured. A large deploying command may need a team of ombudsmen who can serve almost full time. A smaller command may use only a single ombudsman.

There are a variety of functions that the ombudsman may perform; the exact mix of those functions and the emphasis placed on each will be determined by the needs of the command and the commanding officer.

The command family ombudsman program belongs to the command and the job description is determined by the commanding officer. Every ombudsman is appointed by and works under the guidance of the commanding officer, who determines the priorities of the program, the roles and relationships of those involved in it, and the type of support it will receive. The commanding officer is the boss.

Chains of command exist throughout the Navy, whether ashore or afloat. Knowing the chain of command allows you to use the Navy system to assist your families. Whether you are acting in your official capacity as an ombudsman or not, you **MUST** use the chain of command—that is, in any chain, whether your own command's chain, the hospital, housing, NEX, PSD, etc. There is **NEVER** any issue that would require you to start at the top of the chain. When you have any questions about the chain of command, ask your command point of contact for help.

In OPNAVINST 1750.1D, there are two roles the ombudsman plays:

Serving as the primary link/liaison between command families and the command:

The ombudsman is the person in the command who serves as a source of accurate information about helping resources. They can point a family member in the right direction to obtain needed services or to resolve a problem. Ombudsmen are knowledgeable about the ways of Navy life.

Serving as the primary communicator of information between the command and command families:

One of the most critical functions is that of a communications link between the command and the families. In addition to keeping the commanding officer informed about the concerns of the families, the ombudsman transmits information to the families about the command, current programs at the Family Service Center and other Navy resources, and general information concerning the Navy community, and acts as an advocate for command families as appropriate. This communication function is carried out by development of a regular newsletter (or contribution to an existing command or base newsletter); by establishing and regularly using the command-sponsored careline; and by establishing a command-directed phone tree as well as handling telephone calls from the command families.

In a crisis or emergency ombudsmen provide initial assistance, information, referral, and support. Ombudsmen are not trained counselors so they MUST REFER PEOPLE TO AN APPROPRIATE AGENCY.

In a crisis or emergency, ombudsmen provide initial assistance, information, referral and support; ombudsmen are not trained counselors so they MUST REFER PEOPLE TO AN APPROPRIATE AGENCY.

The ombudsman's functions are:

Requests for routine information or to pass information along to command families.

Ombudsmen provide information on family programs, community resources, pertinent local and base phone numbers, and ships' movements and arrival times when released by the command.

When a person feels they can no longer cope effectively for whatever reason, or the ombudsman is concerned that the person is not coping well or appropriately, the ombudsman should call the chaplain or Family Service Center counselor for guidance on how to make the best referral to help.

When an event or emergency is happening and threatening the well-being of a family, the ombudsman's resources provide a comprehensive network of professionals who can help.

The ombudsman knows the roles of the Navy Family Service Center, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, American Red Cross, chaplains, etc., and when and how to refer families for proper assistance.

One of the major functions of the ombudsman is to point families in the right direction to get the help they need and to offer some initial support.

INFORMATION

REFERRAL

ADVOCACY

Loneliness, uncertainty, or feeling overwhelmed can prompt a call from a spouse (especially during deployment, at an isolated duty station, or when adjusting to a new duty station).

A spouse may contact an ombudsman when there is dissatisfaction with services from various resources and family or command policy.

The ombudsman assists in using knowledge of the system to access the appropriate level of the chain of command for intervention and forwarding of appropriate grievances, using confidentiality.

PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL PROGRAMS/ OUTREACH

While an ombudsman is expected to support and participate in command social activities, they should not be expected to organize those activities.

Welcome Aboard/Sponsor Program

Welcoming new Navy families into the command, providing helpful information about base life and getting settled are other ombudsman tasks. The first weeks in the Navy or at a new duty station can affect the attitude and morale of both the service member and spouse.

Deployment Support Programs (Pre-deployment, Deployment, Return/Reunion Briefings)

Ombudsmen have an important role to play in the planning and presentation of these briefings to family members to assure that they are better prepared to cope with the absence and subsequent return of their spouse.

Command Representative

The ombudsman may be asked by the commanding officer to represent the command on various boards, committees, or groups that may affect Navy family welfare. If, as an ombudsman, you are asked or want to participate on a board or committee, you must have the commanding officer's approval to do so. Remember, perception is reality. Once you have been appointed as ombudsman for the command, people will assume that when you attend various meetings you are acting in your official capacity. You may become a highly visible representative of the command and your actions and behavior will reflect on the command.

As long as you are acting in your official capacity as an ombudsman under the direction of the commanding officer, you will be covered by workmen's compensation insurance and protected from liability under the Federal Tort Claims Act. However, if you choose to take on responsibilities without the knowledge and discussion of the command, it can no longer be assured that you are acting in your official capacity and, therefore, you may not be protected by that same coverage.

Supporting and participating in command social activities will enable the ombudsman to meet and get to know the command families so that they will feel more comfortable calling for assistance. An ombudsman should not be expected to organize these social activities.

OMBUDSMAN PROFESSIONALISM/ CODE OF ETHICS

The ombudsman's effectiveness in the job will depend to a large extent on how professionally the position is performed. You must have credibility with both the command and the families if you are to be trusted and taken seriously. You will be judged according to the overall image you project. If you are perceived to be competent, organized, discreet, and confident, the command will be more likely to provide you the support and cooperation needed. The family members will also be more likely to call on you for assistance. An ombudsman is a highly visible representative of the command, and the ombudsman's actions and behavior will reflect on the command.

Confidentiality

One of the most crucial aspects of fulfilling this trust and establishing your professionalism is to maintain confidentiality as defined by the commanding officer. It is important for the ombudsman to know, understand, and respect the confidentiality within the Navy as defined by the commanding officer.

Training

In order to serve as a command ombudsman, you need to obtain a high degree of basic, advanced, and ongoing training to prepare you to handle the demands of the position professionally. Ombudsman assemblies are professional organizations for ombudsmen and offer continuing education and support.

Taking the Role of Ombudsman Seriously

You have been chosen, after careful consideration, for this important position because of your personal qualities and skills. It is important that your approach to your new responsibilities reflect the command's trust and confidence.

Taking Things Personally

As an ombudsman you will have to be able to separate your personal self from your ombudsman self. At times this could mean not taking criticism as a reflection on you personally; it might involve being patient and businesslike. A certain degree of objectivity is needed to balance your concern and compassion; however, it may mean the ability to accept criticism constructively, especially when dealing with command families.

Behavior

Your high visibility means that other spouses will be watching you both when you are acting in your official capacity as the ombudsman and when you are being a private person. Outrageous or inappropriate behavior will affect the way that you are perceived and your effectiveness for the command.

ELEMENTS IN ESTABLISHING YOUR PROFESSIONALISM

*It is important for
the ombudsman to
know, understand,
and respect
confidentiality
within the Navy
as defined by the
commanding officer.*

Dress

Dress that is appropriate to the occasion is another aspect of your professional image. Certain standards are expected of you as an ombudsman. Appearing at meetings appropriately dressed will enhance your reputation as a competent, effective ombudsman.

Professional Courtesy

When dealing in your professional capacity as an ombudsman with the commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, their spouses, as well as anyone in the Navy, regardless of how well you may know them, it is appropriate to address them by their title (e.g., *Captain Jones*, *Commander Smith*, *Master Chief Doe*).

A major element in your professionalism is the skillful, businesslike manner in which you do your job. Having an official position in the command, you must be sensitive to your image.

CODE OF ETHICS

The Navy Family Ombudsman Program's Code of Ethics is the CORE of the program. It is the commitment and responsibility of all ombudsmen to maintain this code throughout their career.

A Navy family ombudsman shall:

1. Support the command's mission.
2. Work within the chain of command as directed.
3. Maintain confidentiality.
4. Maintain the highest standards of professionalism.

THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

This information is provided in the manual for command representatives or current ombudsmen to share with potential ombudsman candidates. This section outlines briefly the role of the ombudsman, the eligibility requirements, and the interview process.

Why Be an Ombudsman?

There are both good reasons and inappropriate reasons for becoming and remaining an ombudsman. Serving as an ombudsman is a time-consuming, sometimes stressful, and sometimes thankless job. The hours are long.

It is important that you examine the reasons that have prompted you to volunteer to become an ombudsman. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you enjoy helping people?
- Do you have good organizational abilities?
- Are you a good communicator?
- Do you feel you can be an advocate for Navy families?
- Do you enjoy participating?
- Do you have some knowledge of key people, key information, and key resources?

***Criteria that COs
will consider:
Maturity and
experience
are essential.***

Criteria that commanding officers will consider: Maturity and experience are essential.

Personal Qualities

An ombudsman must be:

- A person who has the time and energy to do this job.
- Someone the commanding officer can work closely with, trust, respect, and have confidence in.
- Someone who can maintain confidentiality.
- A team player, outgoing, friendly, self-confident, a “do-er.”
- Intelligent, caring, a good listener, a good communicator, able to work well with other people.
- Patient, flexible, mature, stable.
- Appropriately motivated.
- A good role model, someone who will be credible with the spouses and the command.
- Someone who is positive about the Navy and the command.
- Someone who will have the support and cooperation of their active-duty spouse or selected reserve spouse.
- A positive, optimistic person.

Prior Experience

An ombudsman should have the following work/life experience:

- Spouse of a member of the command.
- Navy-life experience, including deployments.
- A basic understanding of major Navy helping resources.
- Prior volunteer experience.

***In addition to helping
others, you will be
gaining marketable
experience for future
employment.***

Certainly, unselfish regard for the well-being of others should play a part in your decision. Most ombudsmen have a deep concern for the welfare of the other families in the command. As one ombudsman said, *"I want new Navy spouses to know that there is someone there to support them."* In addition to helping others, you will be gaining marketable experience for future employment. The communication and organizational skills you acquire will be useful wherever you go.

Inappropriate Reasons for Becoming an Ombudsman

To advance your spouse's career. It is not your career. Your performance as an ombudsman will do nothing to influence your spouse's career.

To get an insider's power. Being the liaison with the command puts a lot of information in an ombudsman's hands. Using this for personal reasons is totally inappropriate.

To abuse private information. Gossiping or moralizing about others is not ever appropriate.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENT

By instruction, the ombudsman shall be the spouse of an active-duty or selected reserve member of the command.

By instruction, the ombudsman shall be the spouse of an active-duty or selected reserve member of the command. This means that a wide range of spouses in the command could take on ombudsman responsibilities if selected—from an officer's spouse to the most junior seaman's spouse. However, the commanding officer/command master chief spouses should act as advisors, not as ombudsmen. Usually, the ideal person is someone who is experienced enough to be helpful, but not too removed from the younger members of the command. The right personality can transcend all barriers.

The ombudsman shall not be an active-duty member of the command. An active-duty person is always representing the command and not the families. The ombudsman must be able to do both impartially and needs to be viewed by the families as "one of them" in order to remain approachable and functional.

The command should appoint as many ombudsmen as necessary, giving them each **equal access** to the commanding officer. Since the workload is shared, it is established by the command how the ombudsmen work as a team.

Not only does this ensure better service, it also allows the ombudsman to occasionally take some time off and won't leave the command without an ombudsman.

There are at least four alternatives for command liaison and dissemination of information:

- Designating one of the ombudsmen in the command as the POC for routine matters.
- Rotating the ombudsman who will serve as the POC.
- Meeting with all ombudsmen together.
- Designating one person as the command ombudsman and designating other ombudsmen with specific responsibilities (e.g., newsletter editor, telephone tree coordinator, etc.).

THE RESUME

A resume is merely one or two pages that summarize your education, work (volunteer or paid), and other life experiences. This gives the command a general idea of who you are and what you have done. It is often used as a starting point in the interview. Even if you have never worked outside the home, you can still prepare a resume. You may have had other volunteer work experience that has helped to prepare you to be an ombudsman. Your own experience as a Navy spouse is excellent preparation.

The resume should highlight the reasons why you would make a good ombudsman. Preparing a resume will help you pull out the skills that you have acquired.

If you have never written a resume, or would like assistance updating the one you have, contact your local Navy Family Service Center Spouse Employment Assistance Program Coordinator. They can assist you in writing a professional resume.

Potential sources for individual recommendations include former ombudsmen; chief petty officers; command master chiefs; chaplains; commanding officers', executive officers', and command master chiefs' spouses; and spouses who have been active within the command or served previously as an ombudsman in another command. Written professional recommendations are always helpful.

These procedures are not intended to intimidate you, but to ensure that the best person is selected for the job. This is to your advantage. It sets the tone for the program as a worthwhile component of the command and contributes to your professionalism.

A resume is merely a brief document that summarizes your education, work/life experiences, and skills for a potential employer. This information should be presented in such a way as to clearly demonstrate why you are the "right person for the job."

RESUME FORMAT

NAME ADDRESS TELEPHONE NUMBER

OBJECTIVE

State your goal; either immediate (i.e., becoming an ombudsman) or long-range, if ombudsman is clearly related (e.g., becoming a social worker).

EDUCATION

Starting with your most recent education, give the name and location of the school, the major subjects studied, degrees received, and dates of attendance.

OTHER TRAINING

List title, nature, length, source, and year of any relevant seminars, workshops, or trainings you have attended.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

List the position/title, company, location, telephone number, nature of the company's services or products, and your duties, responsibilities, accomplishments, and achievements, and/or

EXPERIENCE

Relevant volunteer work or life experiences (including those of a Navy spouse) should be described in such a way to demonstrate your duties, accomplishments, and skills acquired.

HONORS/MEMBERSHIPS

List any awards you may have received as well as groups you have been a member of and any offices held.

REFERENCES

People who know you well or past employers who would be able to attest to your character or work performance.

SUZANNE SEABRIDE
2677 West Avenue
Seaside City, Anystate 12345
(123) 555-1234

OBJECTIVE

My career goal is becoming a clinical social worker. Working as the ombudsman for the (command name) would provide invaluable experience to supplement my college studies.

EDUCATION

Old Sea Legs College, Anchorsville, Anystate
 Undergraduate program in Social Work, 1981-83
 Thomas Jefferson High School, Ship City, Anystate
 College Preparatory, 1979

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Crisis Telephone Listing, 20-hour course presented by the Sailaway Hotline, 1984

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Receptionist, MEDCARE, Sailaway, Anystate, 1984-86
 Responsible for scheduling appointments, typing, and general office duties in medical-counseling firm. Created call-screening procedures to facilitate referral of new clients to appropriate counselor.

EXPERIENCE

Hotline Listener, Sailaway Hotline, 1985-1986
 Served six hours per week at a crisis telephone service. Duties included reassuring callers and suggesting appropriate referrals for needed services.
 Active-Duty Navy Spouse, 1981-present
 During the six years my husband has been in the Navy, I have gained firsthand experience of raising a Navy family through three deployments and four relocations (including one change of home port).

MEMBERSHIPS

President, USS Always Sail Support Group, 1985-86
 United Way Community Advisory Committee, 1982-84

REFERENCES

Personal and professional references will be furnished upon request.

Interviews are a part of the hiring process for almost every job. The purpose is to ensure the best possible fit between the job and the person filling the position. In your case, it is an opportunity for those with whom you will be working to get to know you as a person, your background, and your skills. On the other hand, it is an opportunity for you to decide whether this is a job you can and want to do and whether these are people with whom you can work.

THE INTERVIEW

Several Things You Can Do To Prepare for the Interview

Research

Contact the command, the present ombudsman, or the local Family Service Center for materials on the ombudsman program beforehand so that you will have a basic understanding of the program.

Prepare Yourself

There are certain topics that will probably come up such as: your reasons for wanting to become an ombudsman, relevant work or other experiences that may have prepared you for the position, relevant skills that you have developed, and your opinion of or personal experiences with the ombudsman program. Thinking about your answers to these questions will make you more at ease.

Ask Questions

Use this as an opportunity to interview the interviewers about the program. If you have any questions about the ombudsman program, this is an excellent time to ask them. This demonstrates that you are serious enough about the position to make certain that you are the right person for the job.

Practice

If you feel ill at ease about the interview, prepare a list of sample questions and ask someone to practice the interview with you. This is a good way to think through your answers and to become more comfortable with the interview process.

THE APPOINTMENT PROCESS

It is useful to read the Command Section of this manual, which describes the appointment process from the commanding officer's point of view. It is suggested to the commanding officer that everyone who will be working closely with the program (the Command Family Support Team) be involved in the selection process. (For purposes of the ombudsman program, the Command Family Support Team is defined in OPNAVINST 1750.1D as the commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, ombudsman, and others designated by the commanding officer.) This may involve several interviews or submitting an application letter or resume to outline the skills you have that would be useful as an ombudsman.

TERM OF SERVICE

The ombudsman is appointed by the commanding officer and the appointment can be terminated at any time. There is no established term of office. An appointment may be open-ended or with a specified duration. Trial periods can allow both the commanding officer and the ombudsman to assess performance and working relations, while leaving a graceful out for both parties if either should decide that it is not working.

The ombudsman's term of office automatically expires:

- Upon PCS transfer of the active-duty member/selected reservist to another command.
- Upon retirement or discharge of the command member.
- In the event of unsatisfactory performance of the duties and responsibilities.
- In the event of an unsatisfactory working relationship with the commanding officer so that trust and confidence are lost, such as a serious breach of confidentiality or command security or continual inaccessibility to families.

- Upon evidence of ombudsman burnout.
- In the event of the ombudsman's unwillingness to participate in ongoing training.
- Upon change of command: ombudsmen **MUST** submit a letter of resignation to the outgoing commanding officer. If desired, you may insert an offer to continue until the incoming commanding officer has had the opportunity to evaluate the situation, which may or may not be accepted.

SAMPLE LETTER OF RESIGNATION

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| | Date |
| TO: | COMMANDING OFFICER COMMAND NAME |
| FROM: | (NAME), Ombudsman |
| SUBJ: | Offer of Resignation |

In accordance with OPNAVINST 1750.1D, I submit my resignation as (command name) Family Ombudsman to become effective at your discretion, due to the change of command scheduled for (date).

I have served as the (command name) Family Ombudsman for the past 14 months. During that time I have graduated from both Basic Ombudsman Training and Advanced Ombudsman Training courses such as (examples) provided by the local Family Service Center, as well as attended the local ombudsman assembly monthly meetings regularly. I am enclosing a final report to summarize what we have accomplished with family support at this command.

I would like to remain a member of the Command Family Support Team and am very willing to continue as the (command name) Family Ombudsman at the discretion of the incoming Commanding Officer. It has been a pleasure interacting with the command and the command families and I look forward to the possibility of continuing in the position.

Thank you for your constant availability and strong support of the Ombudsman Program.

Sincerely,

Ombudsman name
Ombudsman address
Ombudsman telephone

Resignation

You also have the right to submit a letter of resignation should you ever decide that you do not wish to or cannot continue to perform the duties of the position. Sufficient notice should be given to allow the commanding officer to select a new ombudsman.

SAMPLE LETTER OF CONTINUANCE OFFER

Date

FROM: Ombudsman Name, Ombudsman
TO: Commanding Officer, Command Name

SUBJ: OFFER OF CONTINUANCE

In light of your recent appointment to command of the (command name), I would like to take this opportunity to personally welcome you to the command.

As you know, the Command Family Ombudsman works for the Commanding Officer. Given the importance of this working relationship and in accordance with OPNAVINST 1750.1D, I have submitted a letter of resignation as the (command name) Family Ombudsman to (outgoing CO's name).

I have served as the (command name) Family Ombudsman for the past 14 months. During that time I have graduated from both the Basic and the Advanced Training provided by the local Assembly, as well as attended its monthly meetings regularly. I am enclosing a final report to summarize what we have accomplished with family support at this command.

I would like to remain a member of the Command Family Support Team and am very willing to continue as the (command name) Family Ombudsman at your discretion. It has been a pleasure interacting with the command and the command families and I look forward to the possibility of continuing in the position.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss the Ombudsman Program and my willingness to continue serving as (command name) Family Ombudsman.

If you should choose to appoint another Ombudsman, I am willing to assist in whatever way possible to have a smooth turnover and transition.

Sincerely,

Ombudsman name
Ombudsman address
Ombudsman telephone number

Turnover

OPNAVINST 1750.1D states that all written records on command families are to be destroyed at turnover. If you are involved with a family at the time of turnover, you must turn their files over to the commanding officer who will decide if/when the incoming ombudsman needs them for continuation of consistent support. All closed files must be destroyed.

While all ombudsman administrative supplies, equipment and files are the property of the command, it is impractical for the outgoing ombudsman to turn everything back to the command. Administrative supplies, equipment, files, and resource lists that do not fall under the rules of confidentiality may be given directly to the incoming ombudsman once the appointment has been made.

A current resource file is indispensable for giving helpful information and making appropriate referrals. Your resource files require a major effort to establish and maintain and should be passed on intact to the incoming ombudsman to allow for instant assumption of duties.

While outgoing ombudsmen are encouraged to assist incoming ombudsmen with suggestions and general information about their command, ombudsmen must brief and turn over any personal ongoing case files, the ombudsman's command roster, command telephone credit card, and telephone tree directly to the commanding officer prior to leaving their position. The CO will then decide whether the incoming ombudsman should have any of that information. An outgoing ombudsman should never brief an incoming ombudsman without the express permission of the commanding officer.

ESTABLISHING EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMAND

Ombudsmen will have to work with a number of different people in a variety of positions. There are some unique aspects of each position that need to be considered.

In addition to general guidelines, this section will consider the major positions one by one, giving you suggestions on building effective relationships with the individuals filling them.

In general, the things you should consider in order to work effectively with others in the command include:

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Establish and Maintain Credibility

Although what will constitute credibility will differ somewhat for each person you deal with, there are some common elements:

- Fulfilling your promises and commitments.
- Keeping the command informed.
- Being honest and truthful.
- Being professional.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Being confident in your own abilities.
- Continuing to improve your skills.
- Continuing your ombudsman training.

Clarify Expectations

Everyone with whom you work will have a different idea of what an ombudsman is and what an ombudsman should do. It's important that you find out what these expectations are early in the relationship. Some expectations you will be able to fulfill; others may require compromise. It is far better to get these expectations on the table and discussed than to allow them to become misunderstandings and accusations about things you did or did not do.

Respect Confidentiality

This is the single most important aspect of your job as an ombudsman. The commanding officer will define confidentiality and its limitations to you. It is imperative that you understand and respect the level of trust placed in you by both the command and command families. Keep things to yourself that were told to you in confidence. This is essential if you are to maintain the trust of the people with whom you work.

Put Yourself in the Other Person's Shoes

- Be able to recognize and adapt to different people's styles of working.
- Recognize how a decision will affect others so that your suggestions will make life easier for them and not create more work.
- Share credit for your successes.

WORKING WITH THE POINT OF CONTACT WITHIN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

*There is never any
issue that would
require you to start
at the top of ANY
chain.*

The main purpose of the ombudsman program is to be a liaison, a link, and a communicator between the command families and the command. The chain of command is the line of authority and responsibility running from the most senior officer in the command to the most junior enlisted person. Going up the chain of command means accessing or reporting to a lower level in the command before moving to a higher level.

- Knowing the chain of command enables everyone in the command to identify the individual(s) senior to them to whom they must report.
- Knowing the chain of command means bringing a problem to the attention of the right person first, in order to give that person a chance to fix the problem before putting him/her on report to the next person up the chain.
- Knowing the chain of command is essential for an ombudsman, who is the officially appointed representative of the command.
- Knowing the chain of command allows you to use the Navy system to assist your command families.

Whenever you are acting in your official capacity as an ombudsman, you *must* use the chain of command—that is, IN ANY CHAIN, such as hospital, housing, NEX, PSD, etc. There is never any issue that would require you to start at the top of the chain.

Often the commanding officer will appoint a military person as point of contact for routine matters. Often that person will be the executive officer or the command master chief. This working relationship does not alter the commanding officer's responsibility to meet with you face-to-face on a regular basis.

It is ineffective for an ombudsman to pass over the POC to reach the commanding officer directly for routine matters. Learning to sort out inconsequential from important matters increases your credibility with the commanding officer. The commanding officer will tell you what specific circumstances to inform him/her of. If this point is overlooked, you must bring it up.

Even in those circumstances that warrant direct contact with the commanding officer, it is good practice to notify your POC of this information. In this way you continue to work as a team and no one is excluded.

Chains of command exist throughout the Navy, whether ashore or afloat. Knowing the chain of command allows you to use the Navy system to assist your families. The local Family Service Center or ombudsman assembly is an excellent source for helping you learn the areas of responsibility within the chain of command.

Understanding the Commanding Officer's Position

It is important that you understand the awesome responsibility of the commanding officer so that you can see things from their point of view. The commanding officer is responsible for the entire command and everything that happens in it. Consequently, the commanding officer is, in a sense, always on duty and works 24-hour days to ensure that it all gets done. This is a position that the commanding officer has been preparing for throughout his/her Navy career. The commanding officer will have certain ideas about how best to operate the command. Although you represent an important element of the command, the commanding officer's priority is the whole command.

Things for you to consider as the ombudsman:

- Occasionally there may be a conflict between what you are proposing and what the commanding officer sees as the best interest of the command.
- You represent an important—but not the only—element that must be considered in making decisions concerning the command families.
- You cannot dictate the commanding officer's schedule. There will simply be times when he/she is unable to see you. This does not mean a lack of support but just a busy schedule.

An effective ombudsman must learn to work within these constraints. You are the representative of the commanding officer.

If you cannot work within the program guidelines that are established and you have discussed the conflicts with the commanding officer, then resignation is your only option.

COMMANDING OFFICER

If you cannot work within the program guidelines that are established and you have discussed the conflicts with the CO, resignation is your only option.

Benefits to the Commanding Officer From the Ombudsman Program

Improved Performance

When the crew knows that there is someone at home to assist family members in case problems arise or emergencies happen, they can concentrate on their job at hand. Even on shore, unresolved family problems spill over into the workplace and reduce performance. Your helping to provide information that will assist in solving these problems increases the crew's ability to get the job done.

Improved Readiness

Your assistance in planning and preparing the families for issues they must deal with, such as deployment, assists in improving the command's readiness.

Improved Retention

High family morale is an essential ingredient in keeping sailors in the Navy. The command's concern for the families, which you represent, and the access to information and services that you provide, contribute directly to that high morale.

"Taking Care of the Skipper"

There is a special benefit that an effective ombudsman provides the commanding officer. By keeping him/her informed regularly, the ombudsman prevents the commanding officer from being "blindsided" by unexpected events or problems. This "no surprises" approach is essential. It is the commanding officer who is ultimately responsible when something goes wrong.

This involves:

- Informing him/her about potential problems before they get out of hand, so that good decisions can be made.
- Suggesting solutions to any of the problems you raise.
- Admitting your mistakes and not trying to cover them up.
- Requesting your leave in advance and making sure that the command is covered by another ombudsman (or the commanding officer's/executive officer's spouse if you are alone) while you are gone.

Some Guidelines for Working With Your Commanding Officer

The type of working relationship that is established with your commanding officer will be a major factor in determining how effective you can be as an ombudsman. To maintain any type of credibility, you must have the commanding officer's support.

Below are suggestions from commanding officers, command master chiefs, and other ombudsmen on how to have a good working relationship:

- Be businesslike.
- Always be on time and well-prepared.
- Represent your position. Your commanding officer wants you to offer ideas and suggestions. Even when he/she might disagree, it is important that you are not intimidated. Present and defend your views, but realize that the final decision is the commanding officer's and you must support it.
- Become familiar with the commanding officer's style and work with it.
- Don't abuse your privileges.
- Be respectful of the commanding officer's position.
- Don't refer to how the former commanding officer used to do things.
- Request assistance when you need it.

It is important to develop a close working relationship with the members of the Command Family Support Team to promote the welfare of the command families and to make your job easier.

Per OPNAVINST 1750.1D: For the purposes of the ombudsman program, the Command Family Support Team is defined as the CO, XO, CMC, ombudsmen, and others as designated by the CO.

THE COMMAND FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM

The executive officer (XO) is a key person in determining the effectiveness of the command's ombudsman program. As the second in command, the commanding officer may designate the executive officer as the primary POC for the ombudsman.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

In addition to the benefits to the command already listed, the executive officer can expect:

"Heads Up" on Potential Problems

Candid communication with you will keep the executive officer informed of command personnel problems and allows for intervention—often informally—before the problems get out of hand and show up at work.

Fewer Unauthorized Absences

Your rapid response, identification of the problem, and referral to the appropriate assistance may aid in resolving problems before they cause the service member to take drastic actions.

Rumor Control

Your ability to provide clear and accurate information, answer questions, and dispel rumors prevents rumors from spreading not only among the families, but also throughout the command.

Guidelines for Working With the Executive Officer

- Anticipate that the executive officer will be involved in the ombudsman selection process.
- Invite the executive officer to attend ombudsman assembly meetings with you and the command master chief.
- The executive officer can clarify and/or arrange procedures for your support (during deployment, official command roster, funding, mailing, etc.).
- Keep the executive officer informed. In those circumstances when you need to contact the commanding officer about a family situation or special circumstance, give the executive officer and command master chief a "heads up" as well.

COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

Your command master chief is the logical person with whom to work and to be your point of contact for routine, day-to-day matters. In many ways, given his/her mandate to care for the welfare of the command, the command master chief is in essence the "Sailor's ombudsman." You are both in the "people business."

The potential benefits for both of you from cooperating together are enormous. You each have half of the puzzle; by sharing information the entire picture can emerge. Working together and presenting a common approach to the command puts you both in a stronger position to promote the welfare of the command and their families. Confidentiality requirements with the command master chief should be defined for you by the commanding officer.

You should think of the command master chief as a valuable resource who can help you tremendously in performing your duties. Because the command master chief speaks for the commanding officer, he/she is able to get things done rapidly by establishing what the priority is at the division and department levels. In addition to this authority within the command, your command master chief is a part of a network of other command master chiefs in other commands who can be called upon for information and to expedite matters informally. They know the system and how to work it to get things done. Both his/her direct assistance and counsel can be invaluable to you.

Benefits to Your Command Master Chief

Good command master chiefs will recognize how an effective ombudsman program will make their job easier. Here are some of the benefits they will expect from the program:

- Happier families; more productive personnel.

- Fewer unauthorized absences.
- Rumor control.
- "Heads up" on potential problems.
- Less American Red Cross and Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society assistance required.
- Fewer financial management problems.
- An additional resource in command emergencies.

Guidelines for Working With Your Command Master Chief

- Recognize the command master chief's value to the ombudsman program and work with him/her.
- Be open and honest; don't hold back information.
- Being professional and businesslike are good ways to establish credibility.
- Keep the command master chief informed. In those circumstances when you need to contact the commanding officer about a family situation or special circumstance, give the command master chief a "heads up" as well.
- Try to figure out where the command master chief is "coming from" and respond accordingly. You need the command master chief to do your job. If things aren't going well with your command master chief, don't give up; the results are well worth your efforts.
- Each command master chief is different; be ready to adjust to individual styles.
- You can learn a lot from the command master chief. There may be age and era differences between you, but try to learn from them, not be put off by them.
- Remember, the command master chief may have additional "pieces of the puzzle." Be realistic; when differing with the command master chief, don't expect to win them all.
- If you have problems, take them up with the command master chief first before going to the executive officer or the commanding officer. Accept that the reasons for what the command master chief does and says are valid from his/her perspective.

Your command chaplain is another invaluable resource for you—especially in those situations when there is no Family Service Center in the area. Chaplains have a unique viewpoint, and talking over situations may assist you to clarify and act appropriately. It is important to discuss with the chaplain how you can be of service and what support and assistance you can expect.

CHAPLAINS

Benefits to the Chaplain From the Ombudsman Program

Being Kept Informed of the Situation Among the Families

The chaplain needs to know the mood and morale of the families. You can help the chaplain keep in touch with their issues, problems, and concerns.

Source of Referrals

You are in a good position to identify families who need the chaplain's services and refer them. Sometimes people are reluctant to seek help from a chaplain. You can help reduce their fears and reluctance to seek help. Be careful not to break confidentiality.

Communications Link

On occasion the chaplain will want to communicate with the families. Your phone tree and newsletter are excellent vehicles for this; in fact, you may want to discuss a regular chaplain column for the newsletter.

Problem Identification

You can give the chaplain a "heads up" on a potential problem in the command to allow resolving it before it becomes serious. Confidentiality requirements need to be respected.

What You Can Expect From the Chaplain

The type of support you may expect from a chaplain includes the following (though what your own chaplain's services are will be determined by each situation):

- A source of services for the families: spiritual and ethical counseling, sacraments, marital counseling.
- Information about Navy referral resources.
- Advocate for the ombudsman program: Someone to intervene when you are having problems with the commanding officer, the executive officer, the command master chief, or the commanding officer's spouse and help resolve the misunderstanding.
- Your ombudsman: someone to call on when you are stressed or want to discuss a family's problem and possible approach or solution; a confidential sounding board.
- Facilitator for an ombudsman support group.

Guidelines for Effective Working Relationships With Your Chaplain

Clarify Expectations

Determine what specific services your chaplain can offer. There are well over 100 faiths represented by Navy chaplains and you need to ask your chaplain just what services he/she can and cannot provide.

Know Your Own Limits

Know when to seek help, either for yourself or for your families; when in doubt, don't hesitate to ask your chaplain for help in sorting it out. Never be afraid to say "I don't know."

Exchange Information Freely With Your Chaplain

Share relevant information, but do so within the limits of confidentiality requirements.

Before the program was established in 1970, commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouses often performed the same functions as the ombudsman today. It is important that the commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief, their spouses, and the ombudsman determine appropriate ways to work together.

The ombudsman program belongs to the commanding officer, and it is the commanding officer's responsibility to establish the various working relationships of those involved. Some spouses will play an active role in the program, while others may not. This is another of the issues to clarify with the commanding officer early in your appointment. The roles and relationships should be made clear and understood by all parties. Should any of their spouses wish to become involved, he/she could be a good source of support, counsel, and advice for you. In fact, the commanding officer may wish for his/her spouse to be an official link with you during deployment. Regular meetings to discuss matters or having someone to call gives you another sounding board and advisor.

Whatever the specifics of the relationship, it is important that you as the ombudsman remain distinct from the commanding officer's and executive officer's spouses in the eyes of the command and the families, with a separate identity and your own direct access to the commanding officer.

Confidentiality restrictions between the commanding officer's/executive officer's spouse and the ombudsman are often very confusing. *The important thing to remember is that the ombudsman must follow the specific guidance of rules of confidentiality as defined by the commanding officer.* Without specific guidance from the commanding officer, ombudsmen should abide by OPNAVINST 1750.1D.

In situations where the commanding officer's spouse is not the officially declared link to the commanding officer for routine and family matters during deployments, the family member may give permission for him/her to be informed in a confidential manner so appropriate assistance can be rendered. If not, you will still need to communicate directly with the commanding officer, through any of the channels normally open to you (message traffic, chaplain, ISIC).

In some commands it is the commanding officer's/executive officer's spouse who functions as the "unofficial" ombudsman for the other officers' spouses (or the command master chief's spouse for the other chiefs' spouses). If this is the case in your command, close attention needs to be paid on how this will be coordinated with the ombudsman. Rather than assuming this coordination will occur, the commanding officer shall assure that discussion and clarification with the spouses will take place.

COMMANDING/ EXECUTIVE OFFICERS'/ COMMAND MASTER CHIEFS' SPOUSES

Clarify with the CO what his/her spouse's role will be. It is important that you also meet with the CO and the CO's spouse to clarify and establish expectations about each other's roles, to prevent misunderstandings and difficulties from arising later.

Guidelines for Working With the Commanding Officer's/ Executive Officer's/Command Master Chief's Spouses

The secret to a positive relationship with CO/XO/CMC spouses and the ombudsman is simple: establish good communications and clear expectations about everyone's role and functions.

- Mutual respect for one another's role and genuine regard for the other person should set the tone for the relationship. Developing mutual trust is the key factor that will enable each of you to feel confident and secure working together.
- Respond positively to any overtures about cooperating.
- Commanding officer's, executive officer's or command master chief's spouses are usually very experienced and have valuable knowledge to share.
- Be willing to ask for help and be ready to listen.
- Learn to deal with criticism without taking it personally or being offended by it.

The secret to a positive relationship between commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief spouses and the ombudsman is simple: establish good communications and clear expectations about everyone's role and functions.

ESTABLISHING WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMAND FAMILIES

The command families are the most important group with whom you will be working. The issues of establishing clear expectations and credibility are important with these people just as they are with your colleagues in the command. Here are some guidelines for both:

Setting Expectations

Services

It is important to let the families know from the beginning just what services you can provide to them. An excellent opportunity is provided when you assume the position to remind them in general about the ombudsman program, as well as to inform them of the assistance that you will be able to provide.

The newsletter, a special letter to each new family, and (in the smaller commands) an individual phone call are ways of reaching the families with this information, while at the same time introducing yourself to them.

It would be very useful to talk with the previous ombudsman to learn just what services were provided, for that will be the basis of the expectations that the families will have of you. If your predecessor did things you don't feel comfortable or able to do, it would be useful to communicate that to the families to avoid disappointment and frustration later.

Availability

You need to set the hours that you will be routinely available. Part of the obligation that you assume in becoming an ombudsman is to be on call 24 hours a day for emergencies. This does not prohibit setting more restricted specific calling hours for handling routine matters. These should also be communicated to the families along with a general sense of what constitutes an emergency and warrants a call at any time.

Setting Limits

Along with letting the families know what you do, it's important to let them know what you don't do. It is highly recommended that you set these boundaries and exclude such things as being a babysitting or taxi service. You may wish to make exceptions for this in emergencies, but even that could prove to be a real drain on your time, availability, and energy. An alternative is to arrange to have a call list of other spouses to be available to provide this assistance on an emergency or as-needed basis.

Developing Credibility

Keeping Promises

The fastest way to lose the trust of the families is to promise something and then not deliver. When this happens word gets around fast, and soon you could find your phone not ringing. It's prudent to be cautious when promising to do something. Better to say that you will try than to absolutely promise results. Should you find yourself in the situation of being unable to deliver on a promise, contact the person and explain what happened and what you are doing now to correct the situation. Also, never make promises on the command's or Navy's behalf.

Other ways of losing credibility are:

- Breaching confidentiality.
- Becoming involved in rumors or gossip.

Timing

Your command families' sense of time and your own may not be the same. When someone calls you with a situation that you have already dealt with 20 times, it's routine for you, but could be a crisis for them that they want fixed immediately. Trying to put "their problem" into perspective for them can leave them feeling patronized. Better to simply keep in mind how urgent it is to them, but on the other hand be sympathetically realistic with your estimates of how long a solution might take. When you promise to get back to them, try hard to contact them at the promised time—even if you only can report that you are still working on it.

Respecting Your Limits

In addition to not trying to be all things to all people, it is important to be able to say "I don't know." Your credibility doesn't rest on your having perfect information and instant recall on every subject. Better to say "I'll have to get back to you on that" than to ad lib an answer that could prove to be wrong.

Taking Care of Yourself

Ombudsman Burnout

By being well rested and organized, you are able to take better care of your families.

Burnout is a common phenomenon in the helping professions. Anyone who is working too hard can experience burnout, but people working in human services—including ombudsmen—are prone to focus more on those they are serving and overlook their own needs. Not only is burnout harmful to you and a disservice to your family, it is counterproductive for the families you are there to serve. Once a person has "burned out," he/she is likely to continue to go through the motions, but often those seeking help will be resented or "made to pay" in some way for the helper's bad mood. It is crucial that you as an ombudsman pay attention to and meet your own and your family's needs if you wish to remain an effective ombudsman. This is in fact part of your responsibility; otherwise, you risk being less effective and resigning early because you just can't take it any more.

Burnout doesn't happen overnight. You won't wake up one morning and say to yourself, "I'm feeling burned out." It builds up over time, which increases the difficulty of recognizing it. Gradual changes mean that feeling burned out tends to become a natural condition. This is why feedback—either from someone else or by distancing yourself to see the situation more objectively—is helpful in recognizing burnout. If you're feeling burned out, you probably aren't taking care of yourself as well as you should be. In this case, reassess your strategies for protecting and being good to yourself.

Many Navy Family Service Centers offer stress management/reduction courses that you might find very helpful.

SINGLE NAVY PERSONNEL FAMILIES

The Navy family is made up of all active-duty Navy members, including single and married service members, their family members, the service member's parents, siblings, and others at the discretion of the commanding officer.

In broad terms, the Navy family is made up of all active-duty Navy members, including single and married service members, their family members, the service member's parents, siblings, and others at the discretion of the commanding officer. Although this manual talks often about the command families, it should not be forgotten that single personnel have families, parents, and siblings back home, and significant others, who are also concerned about them. You can be very helpful to single service members and their families. Discuss with your commanding officer how he/she wishes you to interact with these family members. One possibility may be sending them copies of the newsletter, providing a source of information about the command as well as a point of contact for questions and/or emergencies. An ombudsman can also initiate programs that draw the single service member into the "command family." *Remember, however, that the problems of single Sailors are handled within the chain of command, not by ombudsmen.*

Contact the Navy Family Service Center and the local Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) office to obtain and distribute information about programs offered specifically for singles in your area.

GENERAL OMBUDSMAN GUIDELINES

It is your responsibility to make sure that you have a clear understanding of what the commanding officer expects of you. This manual suggests that soon after your appointment, a meeting be held between the commanding officer, yourself, and others who will be directly involved with the ombudsman program. If the commanding officer does not propose such a meeting, it is up to you to say that you need guidance and would like to have a meeting.

Significant items to clarify in such a meeting include:

- *Are there certain issues, programs, or activities that are of more interest to the commanding officer than others?*
You need to know this so that your efforts reflect these priorities.
- *How often will you meet with the commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief?*
It is necessary that you establish a pattern of regular meetings with the commanding officer - ideally monthly, at times of his/her convenience. Regular contact allows you to report back on the status of the program and to give feedback on the morale of the crew and families. Regular meetings of the Command Family Support Team will also make your job much easier.
- *What issues should you tell the commanding officer about?*
There may be some matters to keep the commanding officer personally informed of—either on an "as happens" basis or during regular meetings. Now is the time to set the guidelines on what subjects these are, how the commanding officer should be informed, and the boundaries of confidentiality you will be expected to work within. Often these include, but are not limited to:
 - Birth, life, and death, or life-threatening situations
 - Uncontrolled rumors
 - Cases of abuse reported to the Family Advocacy Program
 - Cases of substance abuse, which have been discussed with your POC and the PREVENT Advisor
- *Who is to be your point of contact in the chain of command?*
Naming a POC for routine matters allows you to conduct business without having to disturb the commanding officer except for those matters of special concern. The executive officer or the command master chief is often the best person to play this role.
- *What procedures should you follow to be reimbursed for approved and budgeted expenses?*
It is especially crucial during deployment that the ombudsman know where to go for financial and administrative support and who the military point of contact will be.

ESTABLISHING AND CLARIFYING EXPECTATIONS

*It is your responsibility
to make sure that
you have a clear
understanding of what
the commanding officer
expects of you.*

*If anything at all is
unclear to you, don't
hesitate to ask.
Clear information is your
greatest resource.*

- *Does the command want you to keep written records of contacts?*
- *What information should you pass to the commanding officer's/executive officer's/command master chief's spouse? How will you work together?*
The command officer's spouse may be involved in the program to differing degrees. Clarify with the commanding officer what his/her spouse's role will be. It is important that you also meet with the commanding officer and his/her spouse to clarify and establish expectations about each other's roles, to prevent misunderstandings and difficulties from arising later.
- *How will you get updated rosters and mailing labels?*
- *How will you get office supplies for newsletters?*
- *How and where will the newsletter be printed/copied? How will it be distributed?*
- *To whom do you take your newsletter for approval before you send copies out?*
- *What is the command policy regarding the content of the newsletter? Will spouse clubs and support groups be allowed to submit articles and notices for meetings?*
- *How should you communicate with the command during deployment?*
Establish how the commanding officer will communicate with you during deployment (directly or through his/her spouse), and you with the commanding officer (calls, messages or letters), for both routine and emergency matters (including a definition of what constitutes an emergency).
- *Will you be provided a list of telephone numbers to reach the command throughout deployment?*
- *Do any problems warrant a direct call to the commanding officer on deployment?*
Ask your commanding officer for guidance on sending messages of a more personal nature concerning command family members that would not be covered by the American Red Cross.
- *Will you have a local POC while the command is deployed?*
- *Will you be provided a list of telephone numbers to reach the command throughout deployment?*
- *Who determines whether a call is an emergency? You, the command's local POC, or another POC?*
Ask for guidance for unexpected events that might occur during the deployment, including potential natural disasters, so you clearly understand what the commanding officer's policy is.

During deployments, in the absence of guidance by the commanding officer, you can access the chaplain, or the command master chief, or the Immediate Superior in the Chain of Command (ISIC) for assistance in determining not only what the commanding officer needs to know, but how and how soon the commanding officer needs to know it.

- *How do you and the command's local POC coordinate so that "the right hand knows what the left hand is doing?" How should you keep each other informed?*
- *What will the command's local POC's office hours be?*
- *Will you have a dedicated ombudsman line in your home and will it be an autovon (DSN) line?*
- *Will you have an answering machine? Calling card?*
- *What situations warrant emergency leave?*
- *Will you be a part of the emergency call tree?*
- *How shall you deal with the media?*
Discuss your relationship with the media and how you should keep the Navy informed of any contact with the press you might have. Your local public affairs office is your point of contact for additional guidance.
- *How shall you work with the Navy Family Service Center?*
- *How shall you work with co-ombudsmen?*

Your questions are encouraged and hearing your concerns will enable the commanding officer to establish specific guidelines and at the same time guarantee that the ombudsman program is an asset to the command. If anything at all is unclear to you, don't hesitate to ask. Clear information is your greatest resource.

ADMINISTRATION

To function effectively as an ombudsman you are required to perform a certain amount of administrative duties. You will need to be sufficiently organized to plan ahead in order to maintain and update the roster and resource information. The systems that you establish do not have to be complex or very time-consuming, it is necessary to establish procedures and follow them regularly to avoid being overwhelmed by your paperwork.

Organizing Roster Information

For smaller commands, a card catalogue system using 3 x 5 cards is effective. This involves some initial work which can be done when you call the families at the beginning of your appointment to introduce yourself and verify names, numbers, and addresses. Simply ask for additional information at the same time, such as names/ages of children, emergency contact numbers, parents' numbers and addresses, and special needs the family might have. Alphabetize the cards for a quick reference for the command families.

SAMPLE OMBUDSMAN FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

Recording Information

In the case of emergencies you may wish to collect more detailed information. Ombudsman Family Information Forms may be distributed to the families to be filled out. Once they are returned, you may alphabetize and keep them updated.

OMBUDSMAN FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

DATE: _____

SPONSOR'S NAME: _____ RATE/RANK: _____

SPONSOR'S SOCIAL SECURITY NO. (IF NECESSARY): _____

COMMAND ASSIGNED (INCL. DEPT/DIVISION): _____

SPOUSE'S NAME: _____

HOME TELEPHONE: _____ WORK TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CHILDREN:

NAMES

BIRTHDATES

| | |
|--|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

PRIMARY NEXT OF KIN:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS: _____

SECONDARY NEXT OF KIN:

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS: _____

Telephone Log Sheet

All calls should be recorded on the log with date, time, name, number called if call was made by you, and type of call. This provides an accurate record of the types of calls and problems you deal with, which can be useful for reports to the command and to uncover trends. Identifying a particular piece of information that is being requested frequently would suggest a topic to be included in the next newsletter or for a special mail-out.

SAMPLE OMBUDSMAN TELEPHONE LOG

OMBUDSMAN TELEPHONE LOG

[illegible]

SAMPLE OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET

Assistance Worksheet

These must be destroyed with turnover, except for current cases where permission has been given to facilitate ongoing assistance.

For documenting more complex problems, the assistance worksheet allows you to record information concerning problems for which you were called and the referrals that you made. By filing these by family name, you can begin to build a history about the services the family has received. Information gathered from your followup calls should be added in order to note how and when the issue was closed.

Two suggested formats for the assistance worksheet follow.

| OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET | |
|---|------------------|
| DATE OF INITIAL REQUEST: _____ | |
| NAME: _____ | TELEPHONE: _____ |
| ADDRESS: _____ _____ | |
| SPONSOR'S NAME: _____ | RATE/RANK: _____ |
| SPONSOR'S SOCIAL SECURITY NO. (IF NECESSARY): _____ | |
| ASSISTANCE REQUESTED: | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| NOTES/COMMENTS/ASSISTANCE RENDERED: | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| FOLLOWUP REQUIRED/COMPLETED: | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| NOTE: Date all entries made on the same assistance sheet. | |

SAMPLE OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET

OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET

DATE OF INITIAL REQUEST: _____

SPONSOR'S NAME: _____ RANK/DATE: _____

SSN: _____

FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME: _____ PHONE #: _____

ADDRESS: _____

NATURE OF REQUESTED ASSISTANCE:

☐ NO MAIL SINCE: _____

☐ HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY MONEY SINCE: _____

☐ NAVY/MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY HELP NEEDED?: ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF SO, TO WHOM REFERRED: _____

☐ IF ALLOTMENT CHECK PROBLEM, WAS NFC NOTIFIED? HOW, WHEN?

☐ SICKNESS IN FAMILY

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

ILLNESS: _____

WANTS SPONSOR NOTIFIED? ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF YES, HOW NOTIFIED AND WHEN? _____

☐ DEATH IN FAMILY

NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP: _____

WHEN: _____ HOW: _____

HAS RED CROSS BEEN NOTIFIED TO MAKE OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION AND
NOTIFICATION TO SPONSOR'S UNIT? ☐ YES ☐ NO WHEN? _____

IS SPONSOR'S PRESENCE REQUIRED/REQUESTED? ☐ YES ☐ NO

METHOD OF NOTIFICATION: _____

☐ OTHER: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

FOLLOWUP REQUIRED? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Local Resource Guide

Maintaining an up-to-date resource guide is indispensable for giving helpful information and making appropriate referrals.

To make your guide workable, have available:

- Name, address, and phone number of the service organization and the name of a contact person.
- Hours of operation.
- Details on services provided.
- Eligibility requirements and fees (if any).

Your local assembly disseminates this type of information at its regular meetings. Attending these meetings allows you to collect the information to update and correct your personal resource guide. The Navy Family Service Center Information & Referral Coordinator is another resource that can answer any questions you might have regarding an agency or service.

SAMPLE LOCAL RESOURCE GUIDE

QUICK REFERENCE—FAMILY SUPPORT RESOURCES

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| COMMANDING OFFICER | OFFICE |
| | HOME |
| COMMAND MASTER CHIEF | OFFICE |
| | HOME |
| COMMAND DUTY OFFICER | ..... |
| RESOURCES | |
| AMBULANCE (ON-BASE) | ..... |
| (OFF-BASE) | ..... |
| BEQ/BOQ | ..... |
| CHAPLAIN | ..... |
| CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER | ..... |
| FAMILY HOME CARE PROVIDERS | ..... |
| COMMISSARY | ..... |
| COUNSELING AND ASSISTANCE CENTER | ..... |
| DEPT. OF FAMILY/CHILD SERVICES | ..... |
| EMERGENCY MEDICAL | ..... |
| NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTER | ..... |
| COUNSELING | ..... |
| FAMILY ADVOCACY REPRESENTATIVE | ..... |
| INFORMATION AND REFERRAL | ..... |
| OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM COORDINATOR | ..... |
| SEAP | ..... |
| TAMP | ..... |
| FIRE | ..... |
| FOOD STAMPS | ..... |
| HEALTH BENEFITS ADVISOR | ..... |
| HOSPICE | ..... |
| HOUSING | ..... |
| HUMANE SOCIETY | ..... |
| IDENTIFICATION CARDS | ..... |
| LEGAL SERVICES | ..... |
| LIBRARY | ..... |
| MEDICAL CLINIC (URGENT CARE) | ..... |
| NAVY EXCHANGE | ..... |
| NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION | ..... |
| NAVY LODGE | ..... |
| NAVY/MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY | ..... |
| NAVAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE | ..... |
| PEDIATRICS | ..... |
| PERSONAL PROPERTY | ..... |
| PERSONAL SUPPORT DETACHMENT (PSD) | ..... |
| POISON CONTROL HOTLINE | ..... |
| POLICE | ..... |
| PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE | ..... |
| RECREATION (MWR) | ..... |
| RED CROSS | ..... |
| SCHOOL DISTRICTS | ..... |
| SECURITY | ..... |
| OTHER OMBUDSMEN: | ..... |

Memos

Memos are a preferred form of government correspondence. Ideally, they are short and to the point without the flowery formality or format of letters. Memos are particularly useful in establishing a written record. If decisions are made, points clarified, or agreements reached verbally, it is often useful to prepare a memo to the other party to document what was said in the meeting or conversation. This allows for greater clarification (putting it on paper permits the other party to determine if what they really meant was actually understood) and establishes written documentation for later reference.

PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Ombudsmen must understand that while the command may believe the ombudsman program is very important for family support, command financial resources may not always be as abundant as they would like and should take that into account when requesting monetary support.

You should determine how much money you'll need for the your program and prepare a plan and budget to discuss with your commanding officer. For instance, how many issues of the newsletter would you like to print and mail? Will you attend family support group meetings? Will you require child care reimbursement? What administrative support will you need? While it seems relatively easy to ask for and get a box of government pens, the command has to pay for them and if you predict your needs up front, they will be budgeted for. While you may not know the cost of some of these things, the command can assist in preparing your budget. This provides an opportunity to present an overview of your proposed program and the activities that you hope to pursue, while allowing the CO the opportunity to include program expenses within the overall budget of the command.

Keep in mind while preparing your budget that the ombudsman program is just one piece of the overall operation of a command. The commanding officer's funds may be extremely limited and while the commanding officer may want to fully support the program, his/her hands may be tied. Funds just may not be available. As an ombudsman, you must be willing to work within the framework the command has established, and sometimes that means not being able to ask for more.

Prepare an annual plan to project the major events that you will be involved with during the next year. This can be as simple as marking on a calendar the distinct events or activities you will be working on, such as:

- Newsletter writing, printing, and mailing.
- Training sessions.
- Deployment and return & reunion briefings.
- Annual leave.

*A budget will help both
you and your CO
plan a successful
command ombudsman
program.*

Your plan should not be a static piece of paper that you file away once it is prepared. Rather it should be updated regularly as new activities are added or dates change. By reviewing your plan at the beginning of each month, you will have a general idea of the major demands on your time. This basic planning will help you manage your workflow and avoid overbooking and time conflicts.

The second part of your annual planning involves preparing a budget for what you expect to spend. A budget allows you to:

- Determine how much money you will need for the program, and to inform the command of your needs.
- Track what you are spending monthly to ensure there are funds available for the entire year.

Your plan and budget should be discussed with the commanding officer. This will provide you an opportunity to present an overview of the program and the activities you hope to pursue.

The following format is suggested as a guide for developing your own budget. The first steps are determining what you hope to spend your funds on, and how much will be spent in each category, and then deciding how much will be spent each month. Monthly expenditures may always be the same (e.g., the total amount set aside for telephone calls divided by 12 months) or may differ (money spent on a quarterly newsletter would appear only four times a year). Funds that do not actually pass through you (e.g., command telephone credit card calls and training) should still be included in your projected budget.

You should establish reimbursement procedures for authorized expenditures with the POC designated by the commanding officer. In order to track your expenditures, totaling what you have spent by category and entering in the format below will allow you to know what you have left in each category.

USS Eversail's Ombudsman Budget

| <i>Category</i> | <i>Month 1</i> | <i>Month 2</i> | <i>Month 12</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Training | | | | |
| Travel | | | | |
| Mileage | | | | |
| Tolls | | | | |
| Parking | | | | |
| Telephone | | | | |
| Newsletter | | | | |
| Supplies | | | | |
| Babysitting | | | | |

USS Eversail's Ombudsman Budget Tracking System

| | <i>Travel</i> | <i>Phone</i> | <i>Newsletter</i> | <i>Babysitter</i> |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Budgeted | \$ 350 | \$ 400 | \$ 120 | \$ 375 |
| Spent, Month 1 | 35 | 28 | 10 | 0 |
| Remaining | 315 | 372 | 110 | 375 |
| Spent, Month 2 | | | | |
| Remaining | | | | |
| Spent, Month 3 | | | | |
| Remaining | | | | |
| Spent, Month 12 | | | | |
| Remaining | | | | |

REIMBURSEMENTS

PROGRAM EXPENSES

A telephone answering machine should be provided for the command family ombudsman's use. Supplies/support items such as paper, envelopes, pens, copier service, clerical assistance, computers, use of Government phones and command telephone credit cards, and Government vehicle transportation should be budgeted and may be provided through appropriated or non-appropriated funds as command resources permit.

REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993 Conference Report provides authorization for use of appropriated or nonappropriated funds in support of ombudsmen. Section 345 states "Use of appropriated funds for expenses relating to certain voluntary services. Section 1588(c) of title 10, United States Code, is amended by striking out 'may only be made from nonappropriated funds' in the third sentence and inserting in lieu thereof 'may be made from appropriated or nonappropriated funds.'"

". . . This Senate amendment contained a provision (sec. 620) that would authorize the use of appropriated funds for the reimbursement of incidental expenses which are incurred by a person providing voluntary services as an ombudsman or family center volunteer."

Section 345 and reference (d) provide for reimbursement of personal expenses incurred during performance of ombudsman duties when appropriate. The commanding officer shall determine which expenses are eligible for reimbursement, funding levels, and whether command-appropriated funds, non-appropriated funds, or other funding sources such as donations from spouse clubs should be used. Reimbursement shall be available on an equitable basis for all command family ombudsmen. Ombudsmen must submit receipts for reimbursement to the commanding officer or a designated representative. Reimbursement is limited to the following specific items:

Child Care

Reimbursement not to exceed the local rate of the Navy Child Development Center. Reimbursement for child care expenses for ombudsmen does not change established Child Development Center usage priorities.

Child care is reimbursed when you are acting in your official capacity at the direction of the commanding officer. When you choose to take on responsibilities without full support of the command, the command is not required to reimburse you for any costs incurred.

Mileage, Parking, and Tolls

Reimbursement for mileage will be at the Government privately owned vehicle (POV) rate. Mileage should be documented in order to claim reimbursement. Parking and toll reimbursement requires presentation of receipts.

Mileage, parking, and tolls are reimbursed when you are acting in your official capacity at the direction of the commanding officer. When you choose to take on responsibilities without full support of the command, the command is not required to reimburse you for any costs incurred.

Incidental Expenses

Incidental expenses in support of the ombudsman program may be paid for with appropriated or non-appropriated funds when ***INCURRED BY THE COMMAND ONLY***. This is at the discretion of the commanding officer and can be used for individual ombudsman appreciation dinners, ombudsman plaques and awards, refreshments provided for ombudsmen meetings, etc., not to exceed \$25.00 per ombudsman, per event.

Ombudsmen may not be reimbursed for incidental expenses. They must plan and budget with the command to ensure their needs and requirements are met, ***AS COMMAND RESOURCES PERMIT***, as determined by the commanding officer.

When a person agrees to be an ombudsman, part of that agreement is to be accessible to the families of the command through the use of their personal telephone number. Commanding officers will set criteria of what toll calls will be reimbursable. Ombudsmen must keep a telephone log of all calls made, and submit that log (with toll calls highlighted) and their paid telephone bill when requesting reimbursement.

Training Expenses

Training is essential to ensure that command family ombudsmen can perform functions described in this instruction. Ombudsman training should be planned and budgeted for and can be provided through appropriated or non-appropriated funds at the discretion of the commanding officer. Refer to the training section for additional information.

Ombudsmen should receive Basic Training, if possible, following receipt of their appointment letter and prior to assuming their official duties. Ombudsman training is important not only for ombudsmen but for other members of the command as well. The participation of the CO, XO, and CMC spouses is welcomed and encouraged.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the most critical element in the ombudsman program. Confidentiality means that a person may talk to the ombudsman about a problem or a family situation and be sure that conversation will be protected within the Navy Family Ombudsman Program's rules of confidentiality. The protection of another person's good name and the cherishing of that person's trust is both a personal and professional quality required of every ombudsman. Because this ethic is essential to the high standards of the ombudsman program, **a breach of confidentiality is cause for removal from the position.**

***A breach of
confidentiality is
cause for removal
from the position
of command ombudsman.***

Confidentiality is required concerning personal, sensitive information. **The ombudsman can never pass on confidential information, even to facilitate assistance or support, without permission to do so from the individual or as directed by the commanding officer.** Remember, the instruction states that confidential information within the ombudsman program is defined by the commanding officer as sensitive information about a service member or his/her family that is kept within the system for official use only and is relayed only on a need-to-know basis.

Yes, there are exceptions to this rule. There are specific instances when a situation **must** be reported to the commanding officer and reported and referred to the appropriate agency. The exceptions include:

1. Potential or attempted suicide.
2. Suspected and established child abuse and neglect.
3. Established spouse abuse.
4. Drug and alcohol abuse.
5. Potential homicidal behavior; a person who is an immediate danger to others.

For information on reporting and referring these circumstances, you should turn to the section on dealing with suicide, family advocacy, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Make sure that you have a thorough understanding of the commanding officer's policy on confidentiality. If you have any questions, ask the CO!

What should the ombudsman do if a person relates a situation which must be reported by the Navy Family Ombudsman Program's rule of confidentiality? The ombudsman will tell the person beforehand, if possible, or after gaining the information, that the information will not be held in confidence. Many ombudsmen make this clear in their initial and subsequent newsletters to the families. They explain that the Navy has very clear policies, as do the Federal and State governments, which mandate reporting and referral to appropriate services. By offering the prospect of referral to appropriate human services in these family situations, the ombudsman frames any outside intervention and counseling in the context of potential benefit to the individuals or families involved.

In reporting and referring the situation to the appropriate resource, the ombudsman is transmitting information to those persons and agencies which have a need to know (as dictated by the commanding officer's policy, Navy policy, and Federal and State law). The ombudsman is not released from the stricture of confidentiality in relation to transmitting this information to individuals who have **no** "need to know." The ombudsman should make it clear to the individual seeking assistance that no one else will be given the information.

At the time of appointment the commanding officer will make known any kind or type of information to be brought to his/her attention by the ombudsman (i.e., situations which fall outside the rule of confidentiality, such as uncontrolled rumor or gossip, and those which affect the morale and well-being of command families). The commanding officer has a responsibility to promote and protect the welfare of command personnel and their families. In such cases, the ombudsman will again make clear the need to inform the commanding officer. Most of the information obtained by an ombudsman will not warrant the attention of the commanding officer.

Should the ombudsman pass on written records at the time of turnover?

Any written personal information kept by an ombudsman on family matters should be destroyed by the ombudsman who wrote the information at the time of turnover. Any essential followup cases may be turned over to the commanding officer, who will decide if/when the incoming ombudsman needs them for continuation of consistent support.

While outgoing ombudsmen are encouraged to assist incoming ombudsmen with suggestions and general information about their command, ombudsmen must brief and turn over any personal ongoing case files, and the ombudsman's command roster, command telephone credit card, and telephone tree directly to the commanding officer prior to leaving their position. The CO will then decide whether the incoming ombudsman should have any of that information. The outgoing ombudsmen should never brief an incoming ombudsman without the express permission of the commanding officer.

Can the ombudsman share information with the commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief, or their spouses?

In reporting and referring the situation to the appropriate resource the ombudsman is transmitting information to those persons and agencies that have a need to know (as dictated by Navy policy and the commanding officer's policy, as well as Federal and State law).

Confidentiality restrictions between commanding officer's spouses and the ombudsman are often very confusing. The important thing to remember is that you must follow the specific guidance of the rules of confidentiality as defined by the CO. In situations where the commanding officer's spouse is not the officially declared link to the commanding officer for routine command family matters during deployments, the family member may give permission to inform the CO's spouse in a confidential manner so appropriate assistance may be rendered. If permission is not given, you will need to communicate with the commanding officer through any of the channels normally open to you.

Lacking specific guidance from the commanding officer, the ombudsman can share this information if he/she has gained permission of the person involved. The ombudsman may tell the person that he/she would like to get the advice or assistance of the commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, or one of their spouses on the matter.

How can the ombudsman use the chaplain, Navy Family Service Center, or another ombudsman for guidance in a situation which has been discussed with him/her in confidence?

An ombudsman can discuss a situation in general, not using names or in any other way identifying the individual(s) involved when using legitimate resources to help clarify the best way to assist the individual. Once it is determined that a referral to a Navy Family Service Center social worker or to a chaplain is appropriate, then the ombudsman may release the name of the individual requiring assistance to the person receiving the referral, who then may contact the person if the situation warrants or at least may be able to identify the individual when he/she calls.

The ombudsman is assured that chaplains and Navy Family Service Center counselors are bound by their own rules of confidentiality. Other ombudsmen must also observe confidentiality when discussing these situations.

The ombudsman can never pass on confidential information, even to facilitate assistance or support, without permission to do so from the individual or as directed by the CO.

Navy Family Service Centers are excellent resources for ombudsmen.

Confidentiality is the most critical element of the ombudsman program. The protection of another person's good name and the cherishing of that person's trust is both a personal and professional quality required of every ombudsman.

You can never pass on confidential information even to facilitate assistance or support without permission to do so from the individual or as directed by the commanding officer.

THE OFFICIAL COMMAND ROSTER

The extent of the information included in the official command roster is at the discretion of the commanding officer.

The official command roster of all command personnel, containing pertinent information needed for the performance of their official duties, is the most important, indispensable tool that you need to do your job. The extent of the information to be provided is *at the discretion of the commanding officer*, and can include service member's name, social security number, home address and telephone number, and name, home address and telephone number for his/her spouse or point of contact (e.g., other family member or family member care provider). Supplying the service member's projected rotation dates (PRD) is also very helpful in keeping the roster current.

Ensuring it is regularly updated is a crucial command support function. In case of emergency, the ombudsman must rely on the accuracy of the roster to contact families of both married and single personnel.

In addition to the specific statement in OPNAVINST 1750.1D that commands will provide an official command roster to ombudsmen, the ombudsman program was added to the Federal Register of Programs in August 1979, excluding the official command roster from restrictions of the Privacy Act by authorizing release to "duly appointed family ombudsmen in the performance of duties related to the assistance of members and their families." See references in the Appendix from the Privacy Act Issuances, 1987 Compilation, Volume III, pp 546 and 547.

There is a distinct difference between the command's official roster and the social roster. Information contained in the official command roster cannot be released by the ombudsman to anyone outside the immediate command structure or to any organization (spouse club/support group, advertising agency, etc.) without the express direction of the commanding officer.

You may not release any of the information contained in the official command roster to any group or individual without express direction of the commanding officer.

YOU MAY NOT RELEASE ANY OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE COMMAND ROSTER TO ANY GROUP OR INDIVIDUAL WITHOUT EXPRESS DIRECTION BY THE COMMANDING OFFICER.

As the ombudsman, prior to deployment, you can discuss with the commanding officer the importance of being informed of spouses of personnel who join the command just before or during deployment. They are often the ones who most often need ombudsman referral services. Deployed personnel can be greatly comforted by knowing that their families have a resource to call if need arises. The command's responsibility is to regularly forward the updated roster to you, especially during deployment.

As the ombudsman, you will gain access to new information about addresses, phone numbers, temporary housing during deployment, etc. that should be added to your records and passed on to the command.

It is equally essential for the ombudsmen of shore commands and reserve units to keep rosters updated. Historically, ombudsmen have been called upon during natural disasters and incidents such as Desert Shield/Desert Storm and the evacuations of the Philippines and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to coordinate communications to and from families and to participate in a unique family crisis support system. This cannot be done without an updated roster. The official roster is the key to reaching families in the command.

REMEMBER . . . You only have access to information that is deemed necessary by your commanding officer for the performance of your job—no more, no less.

COMMUNICATION

To be a good ombudsman is to be an effective communicator. There are a variety and number of different people in different positions with whom ombudsmen must communicate. Approximately 90% of your work will be communicating with someone, whether that is a family member seeking help, a commanding officer from whom you are asking support, or a human services agency representative with whom you are working to meet the needs of a service member or their family. You will also be using several different methods for your communications. Much of it will be verbal (either telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, or group presentations), but written communications will be very important, too. Your newsletter and correspondence to family members are also part of your communications effort.

Communicating, like other skills, is mastered through training and practice. The information you read in this section must be tried and adapted to your own style so that it becomes a part of you. Experimentation and practice are what will make you a good communicator. It helps to have a kindly interest in the person you are trying to help.

Listen.

Let the people involved speak. Try to truly listen to those involved. Be sure you hear how they see the problem and what they expect from you. Verbalize what you hear and what you see happening descriptively, not critically.

The person who has sought your help is important, even though they may be talking about someone else who may be involved with the problem. Work with the person who has asked for help.

You are a listener, a referral agent, and perhaps a friend. You can help people by listening and offering suggestions only when the individual cannot think of alternatives. Do not give advice or assume responsibility for the person's problems or life. The goal of crisis intervention is to allow the people involved to become responsible for themselves and aware of the consequences of their actions. Work toward clarification of the situation.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

THE BASIC RULES FOR LISTENING AND REFERRAL

Don't be over-active.

The natural tendency is to talk a lot and offer a good deal of help in the form of advice or solutions. Let the person take the lead. Often, the individual needs and wants to talk the problem out.

Be empathetic and identify the feelings. Is the person depressed, frustrated, angry? Encourage the person to talk on a feeling level.

Try not to become absorbed with historical excuses or reasons for present problems. Focus on what is happening now to maintain the situation. Permit the person to explore what can be done to change it.

When dealing with family crises, give equal attention to each family member, whether they are adults or children.

When referring, be specific.

Tell them where to go, when to be there, and who to see. If possible, give the people the name and phone number of the person in the agency who you know will offer assistance and services. When making referrals, always arrange for followup with the people involved and with the agency involved.

Do not call others (police, hospitals, rescue squad, military police, parents) without the permission of the person unless a suicidal, homicidal, or abusive act is imminent.

Provide reassurance that the person will be able to resolve the problem.

Trust in you must be developed and maintained. This trust is earned by acting responsibly and protecting confidentiality.

Crises are a turning point in the process of living where there is a decisive change in the person's ability to cope and function, for better or worse.

Active Listening

It may seem strange to begin a section on communications with the topic of active listening, but listening is the most important and least appreciated of the communication skills. Too often, communicating with someone means telling them what you want them to know. Communicating effectively is a two-way street with you "really hearing" what the other person means before responding. Active listening is a simple technique to help you to understand what the other person is "really saying"; it can be used not only with the families who call you for help, but with anyone with whom you want to communicate effectively.

Using the Active Listening Skill

The listener attempts to understand what the caller is feeling and/or what the message means. Then he/she puts this understanding into his/her own words to the caller for verification.

Communication Process

When a person makes a statement, never assume that you know what is meant. Every assumption that you make has the potential to become a misunderstanding. Assumptions and vague statements must be clarified until understanding is reached.

Basic Techniques

- **Repeat key words** to focus on a word or phrase that is not clear in meaning to encourage more detail in thoughts or feelings.
- **Restate/paraphrase** to encourage clarification and further explanation of a topic.
- **Admit confusion** so that the individual realizes that you are genuinely interested in what is being said and that you are trying to better understand the situation.
- **Use questions** when more information is desired or to pinpoint specific items to be clarified.

Necessary Attitudes and Actions of the Active Listener

- Try to understand what the other person is feeling and thinking.
- Share your perceptions of what they are saying in order to ensure you really are understanding them.
- Explore the problem(s) with them for clarification and to express your confidence that they can solve them.
- Be nonjudgmental; you are there to listen, clarify, and help find a solution to the caller's problem—not to preach.
- Accurate use of these listening skills takes a person to the heart of his/her problem; as it is defined and redefined it becomes clearer, feelings begin to dissipate and solutions begin to form.
- The place for the listener's input is only after the problem has been aired and the listener's input is requested. The listener should ask about the other's solutions before bringing in his/her own.

Other Listening Responses

The following are some listening skills which can be helpful at various stages of any conversation. Used appropriately, they will help keep communication open. These skills tend to be most helpful in the early stages of a conversation, but at best they have limited value. Active listening is a more effective skill because through the decoded feedback the listener demonstrates that he/she understands the person and also hears the words.

Door Openers or Invitations

Occasionally, callers need additional encouragement to talk about their feelings, issues, or concerns, especially at the beginning of a call. These responses are open-ended; they leave the door wide open for the caller to discuss any aspect of his/her concern or issue. The following responses are an invitation to the caller to share:

"Would you like to talk about it?"

"I'm interested in what you're thinking about that."

"Do you want to say more about that?"

"I'm wondering how you feel about"

Silence

Silence on the part of a listener can and often does express a great deal. In terms of topic selection, silence can indicate that the listener is leaving the choice up to the caller. The caller will find it difficult to talk if you are doing most of the talking.

Acknowledgment Responses

It helps to use verbal cues to indicate you're still tuned in.

Examples: "I see," "Yes."

Mirroring

Sending back the caller's own words without interjecting your ideas or thoughts.

Example: Caller: "I believe I'm pregnant."

Listener: "You believe you're pregnant."

Mirroring, used appropriately, can help the listener communicate: "I hear you. Please go on."

Feedback

Feedback is a way of making a person aware of a behavior you see and how that behavior is affecting you.

Some useful rules on feedback:

- Make feedback descriptive rather than evaluative. Describe the behavior you see and its effect on you. Don't try to evaluate or imagine their reason for the behavior.
- Make feedback specific rather than general. Making general statements often leaves people wondering what you meant.
- Make sure feedback is directed to a behavior the person can do something about.
- Make sure that what you have said is understood.
- Make feedback well timed. Feedback that is prompt reaches a person while the situation is still fresh.

Methods and Examples of Constructive Confrontation

Active Listening

The person is confronted by his/her own feelings as you reflect them back.

"You seem to be saying that you want me to solve your problems for you."

"In complaining about your husband, I seem to hear that you're really feeling hurt because he doesn't pay more attention to you."

Sending an "I" Message

This method provides a nonjudgmental description of the situation or of the other person's behavior and a clear statement of its effect upon you.

"I'm trying to listen carefully and be helpful to you, but you are talking about so many different things that I can't get a fix on what concerns you most. I'd like you to identify one thing that especially troubles you."

"I am having trouble staying with you when I hear you repeat the same things. I'm sure there's something important you're trying to get across to me, but I can't seem to understand what it is. Tell me what is the most important to you."

"Sally, I get frustrated when you talk fast because I'm not able to respond."

Refocusing

Move into an area that you and the caller can work with constructively.

Redirecting

Encourage the caller to talk about himself/herself rather than about others.

Asking the Caller To Clarify Expectations

"We've done a lot of talking, but I still don't understand how I can be of help to you. How did you hope I might be able to help you?"

Contracting With the Caller

"Sally, I'm sure that by now you know that I care about you and am willing to talk with you when something is troubling you. But sometimes, as in this conversation, we chat about things that aren't really concerns for you. When we talk about incidental things, my interest in the conversation goes way down. I would like to make a deal with you that you call when you have a concern, but then when we've talked about your concern, you bring the conversation to a close. That way, we'll both be sure that when we're talking to each other, we're both involved." (You would probably not be able to say all of this without a response from the caller, but it illustrates what you would be aiming for in the contracting.)

Roadblocks to Communication

Communicating is a very delicate process. There are certain things to avoid if you wish to communicate effectively:

- ***Ordering, directing, commanding:*** Telling the other person to do something; giving him/her an order; commanding.
- ***Warning, admonishing, threatening:*** Telling the other person what dire consequences will occur if he/she does something; alluding to the use of force.
- ***Moralizing, preaching, obliging:*** Telling the other person why he/she ought to do something.
- ***Advising, giving suggestions or solutions:*** Telling the other person how to solve his/her problem.

- ***Persuading with logic, arguing, instructing, lecturing:*** Trying to influence the other person with facts, arguments, logic, information, or expert opinion that happens to agree with your own.
- ***Judging, criticizing, disagreeing, blaming:*** Making negative judgments or evaluations of the other person.
- ***Praising, agreeing, evaluating positively, approving excessively:*** Offering a positive evaluation of judgment usually in a condescending, sarcastic way.
- ***Name-calling, ridiculing, shaming:*** Making the other person feel stupid, outcast, or foolish; stereotyping or categorizing.
- ***Interpreting, analyzing, diagnosing:*** Telling a person what his/her motives are, analyzing the whys of thoughts and acts, or communicating that you have figured him/her out or diagnosed his/her behavior.
- ***Ignoring a perceived reality:*** Trying to either talk him/her out of feelings or denying the strength or significance of those feelings.
- ***Probing, interrogating:*** Trying to find reasons, facts, motives, causes, or information to help you solve the other person's problem.
- ***Withdrawing, distracting, humoring:*** Trying to get the other person away from his problem; getting away from it yourself; trying to change the focus by joking, offering other things to do, or pushing the problem away.

COMMUNICATING BY TELEPHONE

The vast majority of your contact with the command families will be by telephone. This type of communication is different from face-to-face conversations because you have to depend entirely on the other person's voice and words to understand what they mean; facial expressions and body language are not available as cues as to what is happening with the person. Thus, you have to listen even harder when you are communicating on the phone.

Types of Calls

Information or Reassurance Calls

Most calls will be for routine information or perhaps to pass some information along, or just to touch base. These are dealt with quickly and easily, especially if the ombudsman is well organized.

As part of your responsibility and as a continuing source of information, you must regularly familiarize yourself with the latest Navy and community resource information. The command might make available to you, on a routine basis, publications like Navy Times, All Hands, and other pertinent information sources. The Ombudsman Journal from the Navy Wifeline Association (NWA) is an excellent forum for exchange of information and support of ombudsmen worldwide. It is available through your command, your ombudsman assembly, your Navy Family Service Center, or directly from the NWA.

Complaint Calls

Depending on the type of complaint, these calls may be a little more complicated, and will require *careful listening and recordkeeping* and, with a referral, followup.

Crisis Calls

A crisis occurs when a person feels he/she can no longer cope effectively for whatever reason. These calls are more difficult, since they sometimes require very *sensitive handling* and provision of immediate help in some form. Role playing for these calls is very helpful and, when possible, a separate course on intervention and responses should be given during training to familiarize the ombudsmen with basic listening and helping skills to deal with people in crisis.

Command Emergency Calls

The families have become accustomed to interacting with the ombudsman of the command and will call you first to verify the extent of any command crisis—real or rumored.

Nagging or Dump Calls

Sometimes an ombudsman has to deal with someone who calls constantly, or complains and whines endlessly, or who regularly uses the ombudsman as an emotional dumping ground. You should *be alert to identify this type of caller and handle the call firmly at the outset*. Sometimes you must be very definite about your refusal to spend inappropriate amounts of time on the phone. *Having a routine 5-minute limit to calls helps*.

Service Demand Calls

These are the ones that assume that the ombudsman is a direct service provider (e.g., "Please pick me up in 20 minutes: I need to go to the commissary," or "You'll have to babysit for me while I go to the doctor's next week."). If you have not thought about these kinds of calls, the first few might catch you off guard and you will wind up meeting yourself coming and going. Think about how to handle these demands, when and if it ever might be appropriate to perform such services and when to draw the line. Usually you will be able to tell when it's a genuine emergency. *Having volunteers from the command handle these legitimate situations is another option*.

Ombudsman Telephone Protocol

The following are acceptable forms of greeting:

Identification: *"Smith's residence"*

Anonymous: *"Hello"*

Whatever method is used to greet callers, the tone of voice should be positive and clear. Think about yourself in terms of being the ombudsman with professional responsibilities. Your phone manner should immediately instill confidence.

Initial Response: Complete Identification

A caller seeking the ombudsman will usually ask if he/she is speaking to the ombudsman after the initial greeting. At that point the ombudsman should give complete identification:

"Yes, this is Ellen Smith, the ombudsman for the U.S.S. Eversail. May I ask who is calling?"

Record

The ombudsman should get complete identification information from the caller, both for the telephone call record and to establish eligibility.

"This is Jane."

"Hello, Jane. Jane, can you give me your last name and telephone number for my records?"

Obviously, if the caller is upset and in an emotional state, the information may have to come after an initial reassuring exchange. The ombudsman may know the caller and have part of the information or all of it available to enter in the records. It's a good idea to discipline yourself to enter information on each call in the phone log immediately and start an assistance sheet if the nature of the call indicates it.

Business

The ombudsman should then find out why the person is calling.

"How can I assist you?"

. . . or a remark of that nature will lead into the business of the call. If it is just for specific information, then the call is quickly taken care of and logged. If it is a more involved call, then the assistance sheet needs to be started for the followup process. When the caller just wants to talk, the ombudsman must use judgment about how much time should be devoted to a morale call when others may be trying to get through. The listening techniques of feedback and clarification should be used throughout the body of the call to ensure accuracy and helpful response.

Closing

Depending on the type of call that it has been, the ombudsman needs to close the call professionally with a summary of the discussion, the indicated actions that will be taken, by whom and when they will be taken, when the followup call will be, and reassurance of service in the future. The ombudsman is always representing the command concern for family member well-being, and that tone should predominate throughout the call.

"Jane, I'm sorry about the difficulties you have been having with the clinic. I will look into the appointment procedures this morning and get back with you about them early this afternoon. Is that all right? I hope Tommy is feeling better. I'm sure we can get this all taken care of, and in the future you will know just how to proceed. So, I'll talk to you early this afternoon, okay? Goodbye!"

ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING AN OFFICIAL PHONE TREE

Phone trees can be a useful device for disseminating information to the command families. For a very large command, however, they may be impractical. In those cases, recording messages on a publicized telephone number and/or the newsletter (including special editions or one-page mail-outs) may have to be used instead. **The use of the phone tree should be restricted to command-sponsored information ONLY.** Remember classified information cannot be passed over a phone line or left on a tape machine. The commanding officer should outline for you the times and circumstances that warrant activating the phone tree. *Establishing a phone tree requires permission of those listed in the roster.*

The tree can be used as a means of:

- Checking on the well-being of families (especially during deployment).
- Giving feedback to the command.
- Emergency communication of short messages only.
- Social contact and outreach.

The use of the phone tree is restricted to command-sponsored information only.

To set up a telephone tree:

- Determine how it will be used and how closely controlled it will be.
- Determine the number of primary callers (and secondary callers).
- Determine the criteria for caller distribution.
- Select the callers.
- Train the callers (handouts, orientation session—either as a group or individually).
- Provide written instructions for each caller to keep by the phone.

The phone tree can be set up on the basis of:

- Geography
- Compatibility among the spouses
- Departments

Suggested Steps in Establishing a Phone Tree

1. Identify groups of 5 to 10 spouses in the command by geographical, organizational, or other relevant criteria.
2. Select a caller for each group. Callers must:
 - Be reliable.
 - Want the job.
 - Have the time.
 - Not be gossips or persons who spread rumors.
3. Call a meeting of the callers and give them explicit instructions (written and verbal) on:

Respecting confidentiality:

- Nature of calls (informational, outreach, rumor squelching)

Following procedures:

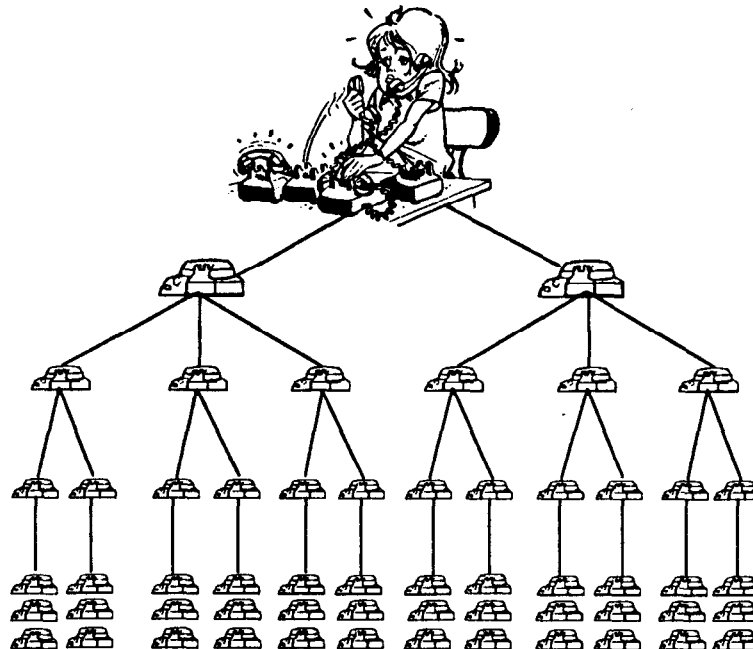
- Exact information read/repeat back
- Time limit on calls
- Always direct contact/never leave message unless otherwise authorized

Reporting back on findings (feedback):

- Complaints
 - Questions
 - Special conditions/problems
 - Success/reaction
4. Distribute typed phone tree and devise updating procedure.
 5. Clarify controlled use/distribution of the phone tree.

Maintain regular contact with callers/working team. Also, develop a procedure for replacing callers.

Phone Trees



Telephone Notes

Always set up your main telephone with:

- Note pad
- Pens and pencils
- Log sheets and assistance sheets
- Main resource file or notebook for quick assistance

Confidentiality is important. Don't leave your notes lying around.

If file folders are used, write key information on the outside for quick reference.

You will need a place to write. Sometimes a small card table serves as a handy place to assemble your materials (and it's portable).

The command is now authorized by OPNAVINST 1750.1D to pay for an answering machine for ombudsmen so that recorded messages can be taken and left.

Calling Hours

If time is needed for family (for instance, bathtime, etc.) establish calling hours for all but emergency situations. Include them regularly in the newsletter and other information about the ombudsman program in the command. Typical calling hours might be from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. or from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. at night or from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the morning. Try to establish two times during the day that suit your schedule and include non working hours to accommodate the working population.

Rumors are one of the most destructive things that can happen within a command. Rumors can lower morale and create tension not only among the family members but among the military personnel as well. This can happen at a shore command, while the ship is in port, as well as during deployment. In a time of instant communications with news flashes being broadcast from even the furthest reaches of the globe, rumors can be a particular problem.

DEALING WITH RUMORS

One of the real services that you can provide to the command—and one that is particularly appreciated by the commanding officer, the executive officer, and the command master chief—is rumor control.

Suggestions for Squelching Rumors When They Occur

Don't Contribute to the Problem

Don't repeat or pass on a rumor even if you label it as such. In the way that messages tend to get distorted, it soon could sound as if you were the original source of the information. Since you are the ombudsman, many would assume it is official. Squelch rumors when you can and encourage people not to pass them along.

Rumors repeated by ombudsmen are often assumed to be facts.

Stay With What You Know

When someone calls you with a question or information they wish you to verify, simply tell them what you know to be the official word (what you have received from the commanding officer or your POC), when you received it, and then offer to call them once you have an official update.

If You Have No Information

In those cases when you get a call but have received nothing, tell them that there is no official information, that you will be glad to update them as soon as you hear, and ask them to please not spread the rumor around because that could be harmful to the command.

Let people know that as the ombudsman you will receive the information first. Anything they hear elsewhere is merely speculation and rumor. You may wish to use your telephone answering machine to update information at times of heavy calling.

Inform the Commanding Officer

When there are rumors circulating and the command is at home, let the commanding officer, the executive officer, and the command master chief know about them. This gives them feedback about what is circulating among the families (and command personnel) and allows them to take the appropriate action.

Be Informed

It is important that you establish with the commanding officer that your performance of the rumor-control function depends on your being kept informed in a timely manner of what is happening with the command, especially during deployment. This emphasizes the importance of regular, informative communications while in port and during deployment.

Practice Prevention

Periodically put out word in the newsletter concerning the danger and negative consequences of rumors.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Media training for ombudsmen on appropriate actions/reactions to the media should be offered by the local public affairs officer (PAO).

As the official representative of the commanding officer, you may be approached by the media for interviews, especially during a crisis situation. This can be a very intense situation. The Navy certainly does not want to stifle your first amendment rights, but participating in media interviews warrants some forethought and preparation on your part. You have the same right as every other family member to accept or decline an interview with the press, but because of the degree of confidentiality and trust that the command and the command families have in you in your role as ombudsman, you should decline.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS POINTERS FOR OMBUDSMEN

In your role of ombudsman, all media inquiries or requests for interviews should be declined and referred to the designated command PAO for action or response. Remember, the command and the families trust you and have confided in you. **Protect that trust**, above all else. If an answer is essential, give a positive generalized one. You should also be aware during times of crisis that the media tend to interview those who are most visibly distressed. Feel free to run interference for those family members, if they ask for your help, and simply refer the media to the PAO for any comments.

Here are some guidelines:

Coordinate With the Commanding Officer and the Public Affairs Office

If approached by the media, all inquiries or requests should be referred to the base or type command PAO, who will handle the interview or assist you in doing so.

Adhere to Accuracy

Stick to the facts. Avoid speculation about what might be happening or what you think might happen. When things get into print or on TV, they tend to be taken as fact.

Outside of normal business hours, the PAO can be reached by calling the Staff Duty Office. Whatever else you do, **NEVER HESITATE TO CALL THE PAO.**

When the Media Call

Usually if the media call you directly, it's because they've found out that you have a connection to the command. They think they've found out something about your command, and they want you to comment on it.

The first thing to do is **PANIC**. It's best to just say that, since that's probably what will happen anyway. Once the first wave has passed, however, you will surely relax, and here's how to handle that caller.

The second thing to do is decide if you want to answer the reporter's questions. Remember that the media have a job to do: get the story. But just because a reporter is asking you a question, it doesn't mean he/she can make it your job to get him/her answers. In other words, you have no obligation to answer the reporter's questions. If you decide you don't want to be interviewed, tell the reporter. If the reporter continues to pursue the issue with you, call the PAO and he/she will intervene. In cases of high national interest, the media have been known to camp out in front of homes on the chance a family member will make a comment. If you see this happening, let the PAO know and, again, he/she will help out.

If you decide to answer the media's questions, you need to first decide what you are going to say. This is not meant to scare you, but remember, a lot of people will hear and see what you say. This can work to your benefit if you've thought out your responses thoroughly.

A couple of tips:

*There is no such thing
as "just between us"
or "off the record"
when talking to
a reporter.*

- Maintain control! Answer questions when and where you want to.
- Always get the name and publication/station the reporter works for. This information will be beneficial later when you want to see the fruits of your labor.
- Try not to speculate. Speculation has a way of coming across as facts and helps to fuel rumors. Additionally, if you speculate and you're wrong, it has a way of making you feel silly later.
- If you want to check your facts, before you answer the media's questions, call the PAO, who will give you all the releasable information.
- Stay "on the record." A reporter may tell you that the information is "just between the two of us" or that he/she won't use your name. The PAO likes to go by the motto, "Don't tell someone in the business of disseminating information, information you don't want disseminated." Another motto is, "If for some reason you can't put your name to the information you're providing, there is probably a very good reason you shouldn't provide the information."
- "I don't know" or "I have nothing for you on that" are acceptable answers. Since you're under no obligation to the news outlet, you have nothing to gain by giving an answer that might be taken out of context in such a way as to embarrass you. (Don't say "no comment"; this implies you are hiding something.)
- Most reporters are honest, forthright, and trying to do the fairest story possible. The fact is that if a reporter is unscrupulous, he/she gets a bad reputation, sources stop providing information, and the reporter loses his/her job. Having said that, there are some reporters, a minority, who will try to trick people into confirming some rumor they've happened upon. Here's how the PAO handles this problem: he/she never answers a reporter's question when the reporter calls. The PAO writes down the question, researches the answer (even if it's obvious, he/she has to check whether it's cleared for public release), and calls the reporter back. This significantly cuts down on the number of erroneous stories confirmed by the Navy. This technique also helps you to maintain control and helps to ensure you don't end up speculating.
- Notify the PAO as soon as possible. He/she won't tell you what to say but will ensure you know your rights, and will help you prepare for your interviews. The PAO can be your fact check. It is also helpful for him/her to know reporters are interviewing families for stories they may also be interviewing the PAO about.

Rumors, Gossip, and News Stories

The PAO lumps these all into one category because, until confirmed, that's exactly what they are. They generally fall into the same category, and the best way to handle all of them is simple. Listen and get the whole story. Then call the PAO! True or false, he/she can help plan a course of action. If you can't get through to the PAO's office because the phone is always busy, it's probably because he/she is trying to get the word out through the media. Please keep trying.

Illness/Injury/Death

The PAO generally knows within a few hours if this is true. If it is, the Navy will notify those directly affected in person, with a followup telegram to confirm. The PAO never releases the names of seriously injured, seriously ill, or deceased Sailors until they have confirmed that the next of kin has been properly notified. However, this sometimes leads to a problem, because he/she also cannot confirm that a given Sailor is well until they have confirmed that the next of kin of all those who aren't well have been properly informed. Please bear with the Navy on this one; it's in the best interests of everyone's emotions.

The Ship Is Aground/On Fire/Under Attack/Missing

Again, the PAO will know in a matter of hours. He/he will be happy to share the truth with you as soon as possible. Follow the same procedure as suggested in the paragraph above.

The Deployment Is Extended/Shortened

Again, the PAO should know the truth. In this case, you would know before the media hear a hint. Rumors from this category are typical around the middle of nearly any deployment. Believe them when you've confirmed them.

Preparing for the Homecoming

Ombudsmen do a fine job in this area. Here are some areas where the PAO can assist:

Media Contacts

The PAO is tasked with the responsibility to contact the media on any issue concerning ships. He/she will be glad to make contacts on your behalf.

Media on the Pier

There are strict regulations governing the presence of media, including radio stations, on military installations. The PAO should make all arrangements.

Scheduling

The media cannot commit 6 months in advance, nor can they accept last-minute notice. The PAO will begin working with some of them approximately one month in advance, and with the rest during the last week of the cruise.

Video Familygrams

Some PAOs offer a service of taping family members providing messages to Sailors on deployment. These taping sessions typically take place at family members' parties. They also show videotapes sent from the ship to family members. Contact your local PAO for details.

The most important thing to remember is that the PAO is available to assist you. Ask your local PAO for local guidance and telephone numbers. The following pointers are offered in hopes of making your upcoming deployment, and the stresses that can be expected to come with it, a bit more tolerable. Keep this nearby because it is good information. (The original resource for this section is COMNAVSURFOR.)

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILIES ON INTERACTING WITH THE MEDIA

You or members of your family may be tracked down by the news media just because your loved one is in the Navy. When events occur that bring the Navy into focus, the media attempts to get the "human interest" side of the story—families back home.

U.S. Navy policy is to restrict the release of information concerning Navy members and their families. The Navy does not give out names of spouses or their addresses, as this would be an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and also could indicate a service member's absence from the household.

If you or a member of your family is contacted directly by the media, you have the right to grant or not grant an interview. The decision is yours. However, remember that once you grant an interview you could likely be called upon to grant many more. Appearing on camera or being quoted in other media may make you a "news source" for all local media with each new development, and your privacy may be seriously compromised.

REMEMBER, you do not have to grant the media an interview. If you wish, you may instead refer the media to the command public affairs office.

If you choose to grant an interview, please remember the following:

- Speak from personal experience only.
- Do not speak for everyone in the group.
- Keep privileged correspondence to yourself (e.g., letters from your loved one).
- Stress use of the support network inherent in the Navy family.
- Support what your loved one is doing.
- Stress that training of our personnel is superb and that their level of readiness is unprecedented.
- Keep in mind that rumors and secondhand information should not be passed to news media—they could be reported as if they were the gospel truth.
- Remember your own safety and security first. You do not "owe" the news media any details about yourself, your life, or your loved ones.

COMMUNICATIONS DURING DEPLOYMENT

During deployment you need to know where to go for financial and administrative support and who your military point of contact will be. It is the commanding officer's responsibility to make these arrangements before deployment.

Communications between the commanding officer and the ombudsman assume greater importance during deployments and other extended periods away from home port. It cannot be overstated how eagerly news of the deployed command is awaited by the families or how anxiety-provoking the absence of information can be. The families are proud of "their" command's part in the vital mission of the Navy and want to hear about it firsthand. Remember that newsletters cannot beat CNN nor other media timeframes; therefore, keeping the carelines/infolines as current as possible may go a long way toward alleviating concerns.

Of equal importance to morale is the message sent to the commanding officer from the ombudsman at home that the families are doing well. Secure in the knowledge that there are no overwhelming concerns at home, a member of the command can concentrate fully on his/her job. In those few but inevitable situations when the family does experience a serious problem, it is a tremendous relief for the crew member at sea to "get the word" via the command ombudsman that all necessary assistance is being provided.

Specific attention should be given by both the command and the ombudsman for regular contact well in advance of a deployment. This planning would be part of an overall family deployment program to include any special programs to assist families, points of contact in cases of emergency, administrative support for the ombudsman while the command is gone, and a handbook containing necessary resource information for each family.

This includes letters, phone calls, telegrams, familygrams, and messages from the commanding officer to the ombudsman, and from the ombudsman to the commanding officer.

Decide when and how often routine communications will be sent or can be expected from the command. This may depend on the type of communication and the command's schedule. For example, a phone call can normally be made only when a ship is in port, and while surface ships and air squadrons can send and receive mail regularly, submarines usually can do so only when they reach port. Messages having priority can be transmitted and received rapidly. Education is the key. When families understand the whys and hows of deployment they are less apt to be upset when mail and/or phone calls do not arrive.

Prior to deployment, clarify with the commanding officer how you are to communicate with the deployed command. Determine not only what the commanding officer needs to know, but also the priority the commanding officer places on specific information. During deployments, in the absence of guidance by the commanding officer, you can access your POC at the Immediate Superior in the Chain of Command (ISIC), the chaplain, or the command master chief, etc.

Some commanding officers prefer the flexibility of contacting their spouses (who then act as liaison to the ombudsman) or both their spouses and the ombudsman to relay information. Other times, information from the commanding officer comes through the staff or squadron in port. If the ombudsman is not available, sometimes the ISIC may contact the commanding officer's spouse to receive the message from the command. The bottom line is that there are many ways to communicate with the deployed command.

Determine from the commanding officer how frequently he/she desires to hear from you, what kinds of information he/she wants to receive routinely, and how that information is to be sent. Clarify the boundaries of confidentiality within which you are expected to work.

Carelines

When a person agrees to be an ombudsman, part of that agreement is to use their personal telephone number to assist families of the command. When command resources permit, commands may install a dedicated phone line (which may be in the ombudsman's home) that has an answering machine or voice mail which plays a recorded informational message (SITREP). This message is accessible 7 days per week, 24 hours per day. Both the separate line and answering machine/voice mail are command-provided and may not be used for personal use.

Talk with the commanding officer about a regular letter to the families, often sent to you in message form, which could be taped and played on your ombudsman answering machine for callers. This has proven a boon to morale when commands are involved in extensive or hazardous operations. The regular letter can also be included in your monthly newsletter.

During deployment many commands use taped messages to provide information to the families. They can be handled in several different ways:

- The commanding officer can tape and send back a message.
- In areas where it is available, the commanding officer can use voice mail to call in directly and leave a message.
- The ombudsman can prepare the message based on the information received from the commanding officer.
- The ombudsman can put a message on the telephone recorder used regularly, with instructions for any families desiring to be contacted to leave their name and number.

COMMUNICATION VIA VIDEO

Many ombudsmen arrange for videotaping the command families at special gatherings or before the holiday season. The tapes are then forwarded to the deployed units. No entertainment surpasses these tapes in popularity among the command—they are viewed again and again. Keep messages as positive and upbeat as possible and remember, the messages will be viewed publicly by the entire command.

Provisions should be made for emergency contact for those cases the commanding officer has designated as priority and for those serious matters when the ombudsman needs guidance from the top. Clear guidance needs to be established on the use of the IMARSAT system to avoid abuse of this very expensive communication tool.

Develop guidance for unexpected events that might occur during the deployment, including potential natural disasters, so you clearly understand what the commanding officer's policy is.

Establish with the command how you, as ombudsman, will be informed of communications (often by the squadron or staff offices in port, and hopefully, before the media) in the event of hostile fire, fatalities, or serious injuries to crewmembers of a deployed unit.

Ensure that the service member's entire, correct mailing address is utilized. If you are sending information to the command about a problem at home with a family, it is often helpful to include the service member's Social Security Number, if you know it, so the command can verify which service member you are referring to. Many times in a large command there are several people with the same last name and it is especially important to get information to the right person the first time.

Classified information (including ships' and squadrons' movements) may never be exchanged in any of these methods—by the service members, family members, or the ombudsman—unless at the direction of the command.

During deployment it is especially crucial that you know where to go for financial and administrative support and who the military POC will be (e.g., sister ship representative, ISIC, Shore detachment POC). It is the commanding officer's responsibility to make arrangements before deployment for the provision of this support. This should be arranged through the most appropriate source within the chain of command. The support to be provided is specified in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. It is also important to establish how the commanding officer will communicate with you (e.g., telephone calls, IMARSAT, overseas calls, naval messages, letters) for both routine and emergency matters, including a definition of what constitutes an emergency and, again, the boundaries of confidentiality within which the CO expects you to work.

Your commanding officer will develop guidance for unexpected events that might occur during the deployment, including potential natural disasters, so that you clearly understand the CO's policy.

Personal Letters

Often long delays are experienced between sending and receiving mail. Depending on a ship's location at sea, mail can often take an extra week or 10 days for delivery. If information is vital it should be transmitted via another means (e.g., telegram/American Red Cross message/Naval message).

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS DURING DEPLOYMENT

NORMAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION DURING DEPLOYMENT

*Classified information
may never be
exchanged unless at
the direction of
the command.*

Telegram (Western Union)

This is a means for personal unofficial communications between family members. Telegrams are limited in length and should be used for more serious matters or special occasions. The sender (family member) usually pays from the point of origin to the final CONUS (Continental United States) site. The telegram can be placed by telephone or in person. A toll-free number is available for the families to use. Prior to deployment call the Western Union office nearest you to verify the current costs and procedures.

Military Affiliate Radio Station (MARS)

This is a network of volunteer, amateur (HAM) radio operators who operate/maintain their personal equipment for a hobby. If the family members receive a call through the system, the operators will explain how to make it work. This service may not be available on all ships.

Those that do have a MARS station may not be able to use it during certain types of operations (for security reasons). Anyone who violates security by divulging classified information may be prohibited from using this system.

International Maritime Satellite Network (IMARSAT)

This is a telephone patch via satellite to ships at sea or deployed commands overseas. It can be a phone or fax line. It is extremely expensive. It is an official Government phone paid for by the receiving command. No one, including the ombudsman, has the authority to make an incoming IMARSAT call without the express consent, approval, or previous instruction from the command.

Your commanding officer will give you clear guidance on the use of IMARSAT. In emergency situations your first reaction may be to call the command via IMARSAT. While, in fact, it is the easiest and fastest way to reach the command, it is also the most expensive. It should not be utilized for the convenience of a rapid answer. Message traffic should be used by command personnel, and will provide a hard copy for appropriate followup by the command. Without express prior permission from the commanding officer, you may not use the IMARSAT. Should you have any questions regarding whether or not you should call your command, contact the ISIC for guidance.

Telephone

When in port, service members may be able to make calls home. Occasionally there may be a contact telephone number for the ombudsman's use in case of emergencies. Unless otherwise directed by the commanding officer this number is not to be distributed among the families. It is imperative that classified information is not discussed during any telephone conversations.

American Red Cross (ARC) Messages

These are used for emergency communications as defined by the ARC. The message is sent from the local ARC representative to the ARC National Headquarters in Washington, DC, for further transmission to the appropriate Naval Communications Station. The Naval Communications Station then transmits it via "PRIORITY" message to the ship. Normally, receipt is guaranteed within 24 to 36 hours except when communications "minimize" is in effect. A response, if appropriate, can be expected within the next 24 to 36 hours.

If the presence of the service member is requested, the decision to grant emergency leave rests solely with the commanding officer.

ARC messages are usually used to report deaths, serious injuries, or serious illnesses to immediate family members and relatives. The importance of complete, accurate information cannot be overemphasized. The American Red Cross will verify all of the necessary medical information, but may require assistance from you for the service member's accurate address and location of other family members. When the message is sent for any of the above reasons, the ARC will include all of the appropriate details, and indicate if the presence of the service member is desired/required and where the service member can contact the family (address and phone).

Note: If the presence of the service member is requested, the decision to grant emergency leave rests solely with the commanding officer and frequently depends on current operations as well as how critical the service member is to those operations.

Personnel placed on emergency leave are transported from their location to Continental United States and then must personally pay to get from the CONUS Port-of-Entry to their home. The expense of this must be considered prior to making the request. There are shipboard Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society representatives that can immediately assist financially if the command authorizes emergency leave and the service member cannot afford the travel expenses.

Naval Messages

These are for official communication between a Naval facility and the commanding officer of the ship/sub and are originated only at the discretion of the sender. For example: an auto accident; house fire; legal problems; lack of financial support; allotment problems; or housing available, and a decision required. Naval messages should not be used for the sole purpose of keeping the family member from having to pay for a telegram.

In addition to messages of a serious nature, Naval hospitals often inform appropriate commands regarding births.

"Minimize" (a reduction in Naval message communications to a given area during special/high-tempo operations) restricts radio messages to only those messages that are urgent and of great importance.

NEWSLETTERS

The newsletter you prepare and send to the families in your command is an excellent way to both disseminate information to them and to keep the ombudsman program before them. Newsletters create and sustain a sense of family within the command and help you perform your information and referral function by providing how-to information and the latest updates on a variety of Navy programs and services. Including answers to questions you frequently receive by telephone could serve to lessen the routine information calls you might receive otherwise.

You may have never done a newsletter before, but don't panic: there's lots of help around. In addition to the materials in this manual, the subject will be covered thoroughly in ombudsman training. Once you get started, other, more experienced ombudsmen might be willing to read over your first issues and give you feedback and pointers, as well as share their back issues as guides. Your Navy Family Service Center and assembly chairman are other resources.

Ask your commanding officer about his/her established guidelines, requirements, restrictions (length, content, frequency, etc.), potential contributions, and desire for review and approval. The command should approve the contents of the newsletter prior to printing.

GUIDELINES FOR FAMILY COMMAND OMBUDSMAN NEWSLETTERS

Purpose

The newsletter is the ombudsman's method of:

- Transmitting messages that the command has for the family members.
- Informing family members about community and military services and resources helpful to their morale and welfare.
- Helping the family members feel in contact with the command and conveying to them the command's concern for their well-being; uplifting, encouraging, and inspiring family members whenever possible and keeping them informed about news of common interest.

Style

Three recommended styles are in use:

- ***Letter***

Easiest to produce, the letter style has no pasteups. It is written like a warm and personal letter. Use short paragraphs and occasional emphasis type to retain the reader's interest. Command letterhead stationery is usually used. Usual length is one to two pages.

- ***Newspaper***

The newspaper style is the most time-consuming because it involves layouts and pasteups and a specially prepared masthead. It contains headlines, clip art, news stories, and special columns. The usual length is four to eight pages.

- **Combination**

A combination of the other two styles is used. It is printed on letterhead stationery or with a special newsletter masthead. It is usually typed in six-inch paragraph widths with bold headlines separating stories. Occasional pieces of artwork may be added. Usual length is two to four pages.

Format

There is no specific format, but some helpful guidelines are:

- The **greeting** and **body** of the newsletter may be in bulletin form or in letter form with a generalized greeting:

"Dear U.S.S. Eversail Family" etc.,

or, with smaller commands

"Dear ____"

with the individual names filled in. The first paragraph can be an informal continuation of the greeting (*"Hope this finds all of you well,"* etc). The main part of the letter could be divided into clear sections depending on the material to be covered. Each section can be titled with capitals and the key words underlined for fast reading by the recipient. Sample section headings could be: MESSAGE FROM THE COMMAND, MEDICAL NEWS, NEW COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, etc.

- The **closing** might be a more personal, morale-lifting thought. A frequent brief statement of your purpose as ombudsman would be helpful along with the fact that you would welcome contact with all of them.
- The **signature** should include your title, phone number, and designated phone hours for routine calls (if you have them). It's a nice touch to sign your name in script over your typed name. If you choose not to put your last name on the newsletter (for privacy reasons), do include it in the welcome letter sent to new families.
- The newsletter should be typed. If you cannot type, arrange with the command to have it typed. GET YOUR LETTER PROOFREAD BY SOMEONE ELSE FOR SPELLING AND GRAMMATICAL ERRORS.

Content

The content of the letter will vary depending on the type of information available to you, whether the command is deployed, in the shipyard, etc. Whenever possible it should include information from the command about command activities, and whatever community/military resource information would be helpful to your families.

For instance, family members of a command about to come out of the shipyard, after a long overhaul, would appreciate housing information; family members of a deployed unit might appreciate tips on how to make their homes more secure, repeated printing of "most needed" emergency numbers, or instructions on how to send a message to their spouses; family members of a command about to return from deployment, or those of a shore command, might appreciate a section on recreational facilities in the area and what kind of rental equipment recreation services has available. Think about the specific needs and interests of your group, and ask for suggestions on things they'd like to know.

A list of items suitable for the newsletter might include:

- A message from the commanding officer.
- Specific news relating to the command's spouses and about the command get-togethers, pot lucks, video tapings for deployed ships, or new programs to be initiated.
- Information about helpful military or community resources. For instance, a change in dispensary policies or hours, child care locations and hours, etc. Always include as much information as possible, especially a phone number *that you have checked out*.
- For deployed units: tips on handling different kinds of problems while service members are gone (e.g., the help you can get at the base auto hobby shop).
- A listing of some of the opportunities for volunteer work, both in the military and civilian community.
- A question and answer section on the problems that most frequently arise.
- Encouragement directed to the family members to call you when needed, and a brief summary of your job.
- Periodic listing of the most commonly used resources with reminders of what services they offer. This is particularly important during deployment.
- Command "family" notes: recognize personal achievements of family members and examples of special helpfulness to the command; hail and farewells, births, etc. This fosters close and caring feelings within the command community.
- A section for the family members to share with each other helpful tips, thoughts, or announcements (subject to your screening for appropriateness and available space).
- A column by the chaplain.
- Information from other Navy newsletters, and from local military and community resources (e.g., hospital, housing office, exchanges, base newspapers). Call and get your name on the mailing lists as the ombudsman of your command (it is especially important to contact the Navy Wifeline Association when appointed to ensure receipt of the Ombudsman Journal). Be on the lookout for locally printed military newspapers, Navy/Army/Air Force Times, Lifeline, Military Lifestyle, etc.

Try to scan and identify useful material as you go along and keep it in a file used to collect the potential items for the next newsletter. Try to keep up with the flow so that it won't overwhelm you. Get into the habit of looking for helpful information to pass along. Develop a filing system so that you can find your information when you need it. Be sure that each piece of information that you acquire is complete with a source to check. **ALWAYS CHECK OUT YOUR INFORMATION BEFORE PRINTING.** Call the phone number given, and be sure that it is accurate.

- A "Kids Corner."
- Notes from the deployed parent: a short note of 25 words or less (e.g., "Happy Birthday, I'm thinking of you and hoping you're having a great day!")

The frequency with which the newsletter comes out is to be determined with the commanding officer. A monthly newsletter seems to maintain a sense of contact in the command, keeps helpful, up-to-date information flowing, and reminds families of the ombudsman functions. The length of the newsletter is up to the ombudsman and the commanding officer. Except for special issues, one or two pages of single-spaced typing seems to be common. Mailings must carry the return address of the command and not of the ombudsman. There are regulations governing the handling of official mail. Check with your commanding officer or authorized representative to determine the proper mailing procedure for your newsletter. The guidelines in the Navy's OPNAVINST 1750.1D state:

"Allow use of official mail as authorized in Reference (i) (OPNAVINST 5218.7A: Navy Official Mail Management Instruction). Mailings must carry the return address of the command and not the personal address of the ombudsman. A command Familygram or other informational mailings may be used to announce command-sponsored activities and provide other official U.S. government information of importance to service members and their families. Information concerning voluntary organizations (e.g., spouse clubs) may be included if it supports the morale, health and welfare of command personnel and their families . . ."

Commanding officers have the authority within the Navy to determine the official content of newsletters and whether they meet the criteria for mailing with appropriated funds. The wording below from OPNAVINST 1750.1D gives the commanding officer guidance in this determination:

- (1) information related to unit mission and readiness, including family readiness;
 - (2) information which is educational in nature, designed to promote informed self-reliant service members and families;
 - (3) information regarding service members and families which promotes unit cohesion and helps strengthen the ongoing esprit among family members within the unit;
- (b) Information regarding private organizations, fund raisers, and commercial ventures is expressly prohibited.

This wording permits the specific suggestions for newsletter items made above; however, the ombudsman must use good judgment about what type of material should be included in any newsletter. Be conservative and responsible in screening the content of your newsletter so that it falls well within the guidelines of official mail. If in any doubt, consult the commanding officer, Family Service Center Ombudsman Coordinator, or Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager.

Your newsletter is a unique opportunity to reach out and be helpful to all family members in the command. It's one of your special functions as an ombudsman, and it expresses your own special approach and desire to serve others. ENJOY DOING IT!

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL (I&R)

Perhaps the service you will be called on most to provide is information and referral. I&R involves answering questions about what services are available, the agency's hours and location, eligibility, etc. It sounds simple, but I&R can at times be extremely complicated, especially when the caller is not certain what service is needed or is reluctant to seek help. Information and referral can be as simple as providing a name and number, or complicated enough to require active listening to clarify the problem and determine an appropriate service and agency best able to solve the problem.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF REFERRAL

- Do not confuse the caller by referring him/her to several places at a time.
- Be sure the person has the correct information and understands completely the steps to be taken.
- Don't be afraid to take time to think about a referral. If necessary, tell the caller that you need to research some options and that you will get back to him/her.
- Don't make any counseling referrals. Refer to Navy Family Service Center counselor, chaplain, or Medical and ask them to make appropriate referral.
- Develop and carry out a followup procedure.

REFERRAL PLAN

When making a referral it is comforting and professional to offer a short explanation of the service/agency, the kinds of information or documents that will be needed to secure services, and a brief explanation of what will happen to the person.

Develop an action plan with the caller. Some questions to cover in the plan include:

- Who will make the contact?
- When will the contact be made?

- What will be asked for?
- Who will go to the agency?
- How will the individual travel to the agency?

After developing the action plan with the caller, summarize the answers to the above questions. Ask for questions or comments. Never make specific promises concerning the agency or services being offered.

In order to dispense information, it must first be collected. The resource file is a systematic gathering of information about:

THE RESOURCE FILE

- Community health
- Medical care
- Social services
- Recreation
- Welfare
- Housing
- Education
- Environmental resources
- National organizations

The resource file can be maintained in one or more of the following methods:

- Rolodex
- Bound books
- Loose-leaf notebook
- Computer printouts
- File folders
- File cabinet

You need to think about how you will organize your growing amount of resource material. Since I&R is one of your most important functions, your system must be designed to keep the information readily available. Cross-referencing alphabetically and by subject-matter classification improves your ability to retrieve the material quickly. The classification scheme might include general service areas (resources for the handicapped, rights and benefits for retirees, child abuse and neglect, spouse abuse, etc.), specific services (shelters for battered women, swimming pools, etc.), and alphabetical listings of the agencies that provide these services.

To be of any value, resource files must be updated on a continuous basis, and the surrounding community must be monitored constantly for information on new services.

Your local Navy Family Service Center is required to provide I&R services as well. Rather than trying to keep up with the whole community, you might just keep the name and number of the I&R coordinator at the Navy Family Service Center. When you receive a call, you can contact the Center yourself or give the caller the number. Also, keep the numbers of local and governmental I&R services as well as hotlines near your phone to give to callers as needed.

The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, Inc. (AIRS) publishes a directory of information and referral services in the United States and Canada. Your local Navy Family Service Center should have a copy of this directory for your reference in case you need to obtain referral information for distant locations.

Personally visit those centers and agencies that you anticipate referring to most frequently and meet the people who provide the services. You can provide a great service by covering all the local resources personally, taking notes on the services provided, and making a personal evaluation.

The Basic Rules for Listening and Referral

***Trust is earned by
acting responsibly
and protecting
confidentiality.***

Listen.

Let the people involved speak. Try to truly listen to those involved. *Be sure you hear* how they see the problem and what they expect from you. Verbalize what you hear and what you see happening *descriptively, not critically.*

Remember that the person who has sought your help is important, even though they may be talking about someone else who may be involved with the problem. Work with the person who has asked for help.

You are a *listener*, a *referral agent*, and perhaps a *friend*. You can help people by listening and offering suggestions only when the individual cannot think of alternatives. Do not give advice or assume responsibility for the person's problems or life. The goal of crisis intervention is to allow the people involved to become responsible for themselves and aware of the consequences of their actions. Work toward clarification of the situation.

Don't be over-active.

The natural tendency is to talk a lot and offer a good deal of help in the form of advice or solutions. Let the person take the lead. Often, the individual needs and wants to talk the problem out.

Be empathetic and identify the *feelings*. Is the person depressed, frustrated, angry? Encourage the person to talk on a feeling level.

Try not to become absorbed with historical excuses or reasons for present problems. Focus on what is happening now to maintain the situation. Permit the person to explore what can be done to change it.

When dealing with family crises, give equal attention to each family member, whether they are adults or children.

When referring, be specific.

Tell them where to go, when to be there, and who to see. If possible, give the people the name and phone number of the person in the agency who you know will offer assistance and services. When making referrals, always arrange for followup with the people involved and with the agency involved.

Do not call others (police, hospitals, rescue squad, military police, parents) without the permission of the person unless a suicidal, homicidal, or abusive act is imminent.

Provide reassurance that the person will be able to resolve the problem.

Trust in you must be developed and maintained. ***This trust is earned by acting responsibly and protecting confidentiality.***

Crises are a turning point in the process of living where there is a decisive change in the person's ability to cope and function, for better or worse.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Although the focus of the ombudsman program has shifted away from handling grievances, it is likely that you will have to deal with these situations from time to time.

Complaints are almost always about Navy services and facilities. As an ombudsman it is important that you know how to channel grievances to the appropriate sources. Every base, every command has a system for addressing problem issues. Determine what the system is on your base.

Remember that you as an ombudsman do not deal with problems between the military member and his/her command. There are other procedures within the chain of command for that purpose. Also, you have no grievance procedure against the command for those policies with which you disagree. Certainly, you should make your views known to your commanding officer, but if the grievances remain, *your only recourse is to resign.*

One of the basic tenets of the ombudsman program is that the ombudsman accepts grievances that merit consideration. The individual must first use the channels in existence. If these channels do not produce satisfaction, then the ombudsman sets the wheels of the program in motion. It is the responsibility of the ombudsman to keep a list of channels available (for example, the Navy Exchange/Commissary, military benefits, medical information including updated CHAMPUS information, Delta Dental information, hospital benefits advisors, public affairs officers, American Red Cross, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Navy Family Service Centers, command master chiefs, civilian agencies, etc.).

The ombudsman may be overwhelmed with grievances or may rarely be approached. However, no matter how frequently or infrequently family members approach the ombudsman, it is highly recommended that all correspondence, notes of meetings, records of grievances, problems, and solutions be organized in a workable manner such as a notebook or file. Not only will this aid in referrals, but it will also provide guidance and continuity for the next command ombudsman.

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING GRIEVANCES OR COMPLAINTS

Listen Carefully

It is essential to understand why the caller is calling.

- Get the facts.
- Get the perceptions, emotions and assumptions which are intertwined with the facts.
- Get behind the complaint to the issue of concern.

Consider its Merit

Is it a legitimate grievance? Remember, it must be very important to the individual or it would not have been submitted.

- Has the individual used the proper channels?
- What positive measures toward correction would the individual suggest for the situation?

Clarify What the Person Has Done About the Issue

- Has the person used the channels available to answer complaints?
- If the person has not used the means which are available, does the person understand what those means are?
- Suggest to the person that the proper channels for resolution now be followed.
- Research the grievance or suggestion.

Examine the Channels With Which the Individual Was Dissatisfied

Determine if this is a grievance or suggestion that you can handle employing common sense and your knowledge of the Navy organization.

Determine What Constructive Suggestions You Can Offer

- To whom should you address the grievance or suggestion? Consult your command POC at the beginning and throughout the process, keeping him/her informed of the grievance actions being taken when you are acting in the advocacy role.
- Submit your position.

- Telephone communication should be used if it is urgent or if it is uncomplicated. This method is more effective after you are established and your functions are well known. A letter is much preferred. Be professional, yet personal.
- Immediately state your position: "I am the family ombudsman for _____. I have been asked to bring to your attention _____." or "It has been requested that I inquire about _____."
- State the grievance or suggestion clearly and concisely, offering dates and statistics.
- Offer constructive suggestions, not opinions.

Confidentiality still applies.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the most critical element in the ombudsman program. Confidentiality means that a person may talk to the ombudsman about a problem or a family situation and be sure that conversation will be protected within the Navy Family Ombudsman Program's rules of confidentiality. The protection of another person's good name and the cherishing of that person's trust is both a personal and professional quality required of every ombudsman. Because this ethic is essential to the high standards of the ombudsman program, a breach of confidentiality is cause for removal from the position.

The ombudsman can never pass on confidential information even to facilitate assistance or support, without permission to do as directed by the commanding officer.

Confidentiality is required concerning personal, sensitive information. The ombudsman can never pass on confidential information, even to facilitate assistance or support, without permission to do so from the individual or as directed by the commanding officer. Remember, the instruction states that confidential information within the ombudsman program is defined by the commanding officer as sensitive information about a service member or his/her family that is kept within the system for official use only and is relayed only on a need-to-know basis.

Yes, there are exceptions to this rule. There are specific instances when a situation must be reported to the commanding officer and reported and referred to the appropriate agency. The exceptions include:

1. Potential or attempted suicide.
2. Suspected and established child abuse and neglect.
3. Established spouse abuse.
4. Drug and alcohol abuse.
5. Potential homicidal behavior; a person who is an immediate danger to others.

In certain situations, it is necessary to report specific cases to appropriate agencies. For cases that must be reported, the ombudsman will advise the commanding officer or a designated representative, and will contact the appropriate referral resource (e.g., medical treatment facility, Child Protective Services, Family Advocacy Representative, etc.) or coordinate with the Family Service Center staff to make a referral for professional assistance.

Part of the referral process is to offer a short explanation of the service/agency, the kinds of information and documents that the caller will need to get help, and a brief explanation of what they may expect. This is both comforting and professional. After the referral has been made, you are no longer part of the solution and will not receive any followup reports about the family situation. Keep the situation confidential within the boundaries of the commanding officer's guidance and the law.

The sections that follow describe examples of situations requiring immediate referral.

POTENTIAL SUICIDE SITUATIONS

Suicidal individuals have no right to confidentiality.

IMMEDIATE ACTION must be taken to inform the nearest medical facility, the police, a professional counselor, or the command, as is appropriate. Make sure that your resource list is current and near your telephone for handy reference. Recognize and acknowledge your limitations. Provide immediate intervention to assist; then refer to appropriate professionals.

These individuals feel powerless, depressed, unwanted, angry, and overwhelmed, and are under a large amount of stress. Their situation seems hopeless to them. They perceive no alternatives to their situation and no support systems upon which they can call.

Here are some guidelines that may help you deal with the situation and assist in the referral process to appropriate professionals:

- Always take the person's threat seriously.
- Remain calm. Calmness can have a positive and contagious effect.
- It is important to obtain the person's name, location, and phone number in case you are cut off.
- Listen actively, reflect feelings, ask open-ended questions. Empathize.
- Do not give promises or assurances that everything will be all right.
- Find out if the caller is alone. Determine if a neighbor, friend or relative is available.
- Remember you are not responsible for this person's behavior, nor can you control it.
- Be sure to follow up on all suicide crisis calls, if requested by appropriate professional.

Follow up on suicide calls:

- Remain calm.
- Get help. Try to keep the caller on the phone while you get someone else to call the police with the caller's name and location.
- **Remember you are not a professional counselor.** If you have any doubt about the safety of the potentially suicidal person, take him/her to the nearest military emergency room (ER). If there isn't one close by, go to the local hospital.
- Keep the situation **confidential** within the boundaries of the commanding officer's guidance and the law!
- Do not expect a followup report from the professional counselors involved in the case. Once you have made the helping connection, you have no further "need to know" other than guidance from the counselors on how to assist if the person calls you again.

Your Role

You may observe signs of abuse in the course of your responsibilities. Ombudsmen may obtain information from the spouses with whom they have contact. Be prepared by knowing the Navy Family Service Center Family Advocacy Representative (FAR), and/or the local child protective services. Keep this information readily accessible.

If you have good reason to suspect child maltreatment, are unsure about whether or not maltreatment has occurred, or believe you have knowledge of a situation with potential for abuse:

Report Your Suspicions

Remember that your first responsibility is to protect the safety of the child. Make note of the person involved, the time, date, and place, and other pertinent data about the situation and signs you have observed.

Immediately contact the FAR at a military facility (clinic or hospital) or the appropriate staff at the Navy Family Service Center and provide the basic information requested. They can help you to determine if there is a serious cause for alarm, and how best to proceed within legal requirements for the best interests of the child and family. Such calls will be treated with confidentiality.

If for any reason a Family Advocacy Program is not available, contact the local Child Protective Services (CPS) directly and report the situation. Notify the FAR or other FAP representative of your action as soon as possible. Almost all States guarantee the anonymity of the reporter as well as immunity from prosecution/liability for a "good faith" report. There are also criminal penalties for those with official responsibilities who fail to report child abuse. The CPS is required to treat each case reported and will follow up on reports.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

In the case of a voluntary self-referral, put the person in touch with the FAR, the Navy Family Service Center, or the local Child Protective Services. Follow up the call to the appropriate person or agency to confirm that contact was made.

Do not discuss the information with anyone except the designated FAR authorities, commanding officer, or local Child Protective Services.

You may also refer the individual to the Navy Family Service Center for assistance, particularly when you are concerned about the behavior of a service member or spouse but have not seen direct evidence of abuse.

Responding to the Abuser/Neglector

***The ombudsman is not
a professional
counselor.***

Your response to the child or adult when confronted with a maltreatment problem will, of course, be guided by circumstances.

- Do not attempt to take on the role of investigator.
- Be supportive and sensitive to the person's feelings and fears. Remember that most parents (even abusers) love their children—they just don't love them very well, or know how to act on that love.
- Stay calm and do not make threats or judgmental statements. Expect denial.
- State who you are going to contact, if that is the case, and emphasize the help/support available to all families. Explain the Navy's policy in Family Advocacy. Referral to the FAR is designed to ensure that the child will be safe, and that the family will receive the help to function more effectively.

REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR AND ARE NOT EXPECTED TO BE.

SUSPECTED AND ESTABLISHED CHILD ABUSE/ NEGLECT

SECNAVINST 1752.3 states: "Recognize the sensitive personal nature of family advocacy problems and the great risk to career and public reputation of unfounded or erroneous charges of abuse or neglect. All involved personnel must absolutely ensure careful, limited distribution, and sensitive handling of case information in all phases of the Family Advocacy Program (FAP)."

State laws mandate the reporting of all suspected incidents of physical or emotional abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse of a child. Navy policy makes it clear that everyone in the Navy community, including supervisors and service providers, has the responsibility to be alert to abuse situations and report them to the appropriate FAP authorities. Learn to recognize signs of abuse, and contact the FAR or Navy Family Service Center family advocacy staff whenever you suspect abuse or the potential for abuse. The Family Advocacy Program can provide you with guidance in responding to sensitive situations, and coordinate a response designed to protect the best interests of the child, the family, and the Navy.

Child maltreatment of any type is contrary to law and Navy regulation and requires official attention. The child's safety and well-being are protected by law; all 50 states and U.S. territories have mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting statutes. Navy policy requires unit supervisors, Navy service providers, and others in positions of responsibility to report suspected cases of abuse to the Family Advocacy Representative (FAR) or other designated Family Advocacy Program (FAP) representative, and/or the local Child Protective Services.

OPNAVINST 1750.1D states: "Known incidents of spouse abuse must be reported to the Family Advocacy Representative or to the Family Service Center. Inform the family member that the information will be relayed to the Family Advocacy Representative who will provide further advice and/or assistance. Advise the family member regarding counseling services available from or through the Family Advocacy Representative and other sources, and that a shelter or safe house can be located if needed."

KNOWN INCIDENTS OF SPOUSE ABUSE

Responding to Spouse Abuse

Spouse abuse differs from child abuse in that reporting and intervention are not mandated by law in every state. A spouse, being an adult, is not assumed to require a higher degree of legal protection than other adults.

At the same time, violent acts between spouses are crimes in the same sense that violent acts between strangers are crimes. **It is a matter of serious concern to the Navy, and Navy policy mandates that appropriate action be taken when spouse abuse comes to the attention of the command.**

Your responsibilities as an ombudsman are to:

- Encourage a service member or spouse to contact the Navy Family Service Center staff or the FAR for assistance whenever you suspect abuse or the potential for future abuse.
- Report to the FAR instances of spouse abuse when either admitted by a service member or reported by a spouse who wishes the matter reported.
- Assist the victim in making the report directly.
- Inform your command.

You should be prepared for the fact that the victim, whether a service member or a spouse, may be extremely reluctant to report an incident, seek help, or after reporting the incident, may recant his/her story. In these cases, you cannot force the victim to take action. Victims often fear the consequences for their spouse's career and their future support. Some see themselves as somehow "guilty" for their spouse's abusive behavior. Others may have been raised in a culture or family where beatings were expected or accepted.

If you have clear family member evidence of abuse (an incident report in housing or injuries treated at the medical facility), you should report the incident to the FAR. You should encourage the victim to contact the Navy Family Service Center or FAR directly. Let them know that help is available and that administrative separation is usually only a last resort, and that their visit will be handled in confidence. Ask the victim for support in involving the spouse directly. Ignoring the situation may lead to more serious injury or even death, possibly for either spouse.

If you feel that the victim is in real danger of being seriously injured or killed, you are ethically bound to report the case to ensure command support for intervention and treatment. Your action is in the best interests of all parties, as well as Navy readiness. Referral to Family Advocacy is critical to victim protection. Do not assume any personal liability for failure to contact appropriate professional resources.

Staff at the Navy Family Service Center or the FAR can advise you on handling sensitive areas in questionable situations. Call them if you are unsure how to handle a situation, including arranging temporary shelter or a safe house.

DRUG/ALCOHOL ABUSE

As described in OPNAVINST 5350.4B.

POTENTIAL HOMICIDES, VIOLENCE, OR LIFE- ENDANGERING SITUATIONS

Immediate action must be taken to inform the appropriate authorities.

The ombudsman shall adhere to the strictest code of confidentiality as defined by their commanding officer in order to protect the privacy of individuals and to maintain the credibility of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

Followup

After the referral has been made and FAR contact established, you are no longer part of the solution and will not receive any followup reports about the family situation. It may be helpful for you to call the FAR interacting with the family and ask what he/she wants you to do with any further calls from the family about that situation. In order to protect the family as much as possible, you will not receive details of the case.

EMERGENCIES AND CRISES

Perhaps one of the most difficult, yet most important, functions an ombudsman can perform is to handle a crisis call. This may be a part of the job that you are dreading or feeling unable to handle. Those feelings are very natural. Handling crisis calls is something that you can prepare yourself to do. However, *you must at all times remember that you are not a trained counselor and in all of these situations referral to a professional counselor should be made as soon as possible.* This section is included to assist you until you are able to make the appropriate referrals.

Crisis situations may involve just one person/family, or they may involve an entire command. Each type of situation will be treated separately.

INDIVIDUAL CRISES

The person experiencing the crisis is less effective than usual, feels helpless and ineffective, perceives the experience as unique to his/her grief, develops generalized tension and symptoms of anxiety, and needs information, emotional support, and empowerment.

Crisis Calls

There are two main things to remember:

- You are not responsible for the crisis.
- "Crisis" is relative; one person's crisis may be an ordinary event for someone else.

Emergency Calls

The possibility of receiving emergency calls reinforces the importance of having an up-to-date resource file with the emergency numbers (police, fire, ambulance, poison control center, hospital emergency room, rescue squad) easily accessible.

Remain calm, ask the necessary questions to determine the situation, and then give the appropriate referral information.

Once the emergency incident has passed, get permission from the person to activate his/her support systems (e.g., relatives and friends, the command family support team, Navy Family Service Center, Navy/Marine Corps Relief, American Red Cross, etc.) so that the family receives the needed assistance and support to cope with the aftermath of the emergency.

These are defined as those crisis in which a significant proportion of the command is affected. These situations, which differ in terms of the preparation for and management of the crisis, are especially important if large numbers of personnel and their families are involved.

Regardless of the kind and extent of the command emergency, the ombudsman is never to act independently or without explicit guidance from the command. The ombudsman should be thoroughly aware of the commanding officer's policies and expectations in the event of a crisis or natural disaster occurring where the command families live.

The ombudsmen should stay in close communication with the command to lend whatever assistance is requested. If the command is deployed, the ombudsman should be in communication with the assisting squadron or command ISIC and the other members of the command family support team (commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief spouse, spouse club/support group representative). The Navy Family Service Center that serves the command in crisis will want to work closely with the command ombudsman.

The ombudsmen have been the primary point of contact for all family members. The families have become accustomed to interacting with the ombudsmen of the command and will call you first to verify the extent of any command crisis. To facilitate the prediction of family needs, the command may invite you to participate in the planning of the command crisis response plan. It would be helpful for you to have a copy of the finished product. You should be thoroughly aware of the commanding officer's policies and expectations in the event of such a crisis.

COMMAND EMERGENCIES

*CACOs handle the
official notification
of families.
Ombudsmen are
NOT to accompany
the CACO.*

The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society and the American Red Cross are **essential** resources for the command families during this time. You should be familiar with the many things they can do to assist.

The casualty definition period (that time in which it is not yet certain which crewmembers have been killed or wounded) is the most stressful for the families. The families of the crew (especially the families of the victims) need to be protected/isolated from the press. A place on base is often designated by the command for the families to gather. This location offers the families camaraderie of friends, and ideally serves as the location for the rapid flow of accurate communication from the command and provides security from the press.

Casualty Assistance Calls program (CACO) personnel are trained to respond appropriately in the event of mass casualty. Remember, CACOs handle the official notification of the families, and ombudsmen are NOT to accompany the CACO. The ombudsman may have current location and contact telephone numbers which might make the CACO's job of locating and informing the families easier. The ombudsman should release any requested information to the CACO without question and should not be informed of the purpose of the content until after the family member has been appropriately notified. Don't speculate nor ask for information you are not authorized to have.

Keep the Roster Current

The basis for smooth handling of the situation relies on the rapid availability of information. What appears to be a routine or even unnecessary exercise in normal times takes on a critical importance during emergencies. A crucial role of the ombudsman in crisis response is to keep an up-to-date roster of current family locations, liaison as appropriate, and supply the contact information to the command as requested. If the families are not already in the designated gathering place and call you, try to stay current with where they can be reached as information from the command becomes available.

Another role of the ombudsman is to encourage families to keep their personal paperwork up-to-date and accurate. This includes personal IDs, DEERS enrollment for all family members, the service member's will, SGLI, and pg. 2 information. Reminders of this should occasionally be printed in your newsletters to the families.

What To Do if It Is Your Command in Crisis

Your spouse being in danger or possibly becoming a casualty places tremendous emotional stress on you, making it difficult to function in the usual manner.

- Remain as calm as possible. The command families will be looking to you for information and support. They may feel that you are their only link to the command and their loved ones.
- Be aware of your own personal support system and know when to access that system for your emotional protection.

- Coordinate with all ombudsmen appointed to the command and contact your official POC, who will give you the exact message to place on your careline/answering machine. You may be flooded with phone calls from spouses, parents, siblings, and significant others of your command's families; and the media. Have a supply of paper, pens/pencils, and your most current command roster readily available so you can remain current with family locations.
- Stay in contact with your commanding officer/executive officer/command master chief/chief of the boat spouses and your co-ombudsmen. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the size of the command, and the disaster plan enacted, this group often finds comfort in being together during the time of waiting for confirmation of details.
- Remember the unofficial Naval policy: "No News Is Good News!" Information may be slow coming in the beginning and at other times during the crisis. Try to field your calls as much as possible and explain to the family members that they will receive any updated verified information released by the command as soon as possible.
- If you are temporarily unable to perform your ombudsman duties, inform the command, which may appoint someone to assist you. The command may choose to accept ombudsman assistance offered by other commands.

Possible Additional Assistance

As part of crisis intervention, the ombudsman may be requested by the command to assist with the following:

- Staffing a sheltered place for command families to gather for an extended length of time.
- Provision of meals for families and volunteers.
- Assistance with transportation/lodging of family members arriving from out of town.
- Child care needs. It is recommended that when possible, young children be left in the care of a trusted friend or neighbor during the torturous waiting period. However, flexibility and understanding are the keys to emotional control during these times.
- Coordination of locations for the counselors, chaplains, and other professionals to interact with specific families in privacy.
- Coordination and tracking of large numbers of volunteers who will present themselves and be indispensable.
- Ongoing aftercare: Stress management groups, ships' reunion planning, grief seminars, communication with crew, hospitalization and medical/emotional followup, and provision of other needed services.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Another form of command emergency you may be faced with is that of a natural disaster (e.g., an earthquake, flood, or hurricane). Once again, advanced planning and clarification of expectations are essential, as well as complete updated rosters of family addresses and contact telephone numbers.

An evaluation of the possible types of disasters that might befall your area will make advanced planning a little easier. In most places, this has already been done in great detail. Navy bases have disaster preparedness plans in place. Some have printed disaster preparedness guides for general distribution to personnel and their families. Ideally, pertinent information from these plans and availability of the guides is widely known, perhaps through the base publication or the ombudsman newsletter.

In any disaster, the most basic thing to remember is to remain calm. People have been killed or critically injured needlessly because they took thoughtless irrational actions. Take time to think and then take the appropriate action. Calm, steady rumor control is also essential.

The command should locate, update, and distribute the local emergency checklist. In the command ombudsman newsletter, you may remind the families that a major disaster of almost any kind may interfere with the area's normal supplies of water, food, heat, and other day-to-day necessities. The families should keep on hand, in or around their homes, a stock of emergency supplies sufficient to meet their particular needs for a few days, preferably enough for a week. If an order to evacuate is given emergency supplies should be taken along, especially any medications that may be needed. Emergency shelters are often only that, a place of protection from the elements.

Your local Navy Family Service Center will probably have informational and educational pamphlets about natural disasters.

Emergency bulletins and directions are usually given over the local TV and radio stations. In military housing areas, when time permits, security police may pass warning information via loudspeaker systems.

In the event that the local Navy disaster preparedness plan is put into effect, **the ombudsman should be called and informed of the nature of the disaster and which plan the command has put into effect.** For example: a hurricane is expected to hit the immediate area within a certain timeframe and evacuation of all non-essential personnel has been ordered by the command. There is a specific evacuation route and temporary shelter designated for families of personnel in housing or assigned to a specific base. These emergency shelters will have their own disaster assistance plans in effect. The commanding officer may ask the ombudsman to call the families of the command and **CALMLY** inform them of the evacuation procedures and normal expectations. **Make as many calls as possible, but do not put yourself in a dangerous position by failing to evacuate yourself and your family within the timeframe recommended by the command!**

Use your telephone sparingly to report important events. Tying up telephone lines unnecessarily can prevent other emergency calls from being completed.

Augment your normal list of reference telephone numbers with additional emergency telephone numbers (e.g., the base Disaster Preparedness Office, as well as the City and County Civil Defense Agency numbers).

The ombudsman may be called upon after a disaster to coordinate some of the relief efforts (e.g., water and food distribution to those needing it the most). You may be asked to do a special mailing with current instructions and support information, including reminders about boiling water, etc., as appropriate.

Recording names, addresses, and contact telephone numbers as they are given to you allows the command to keep track of where the command's families are going. The ombudsman has been called upon in the past to contact all of the families after the disaster is over, obtain status, and incorporate the information into messages to the deployed units. This contact informs the command of family safety, condition, and current location, which helps to decrease the level of anxiety and concern (panic) among those deployed.

This program provides a broad range of assistance to the next of kin (NOK) of a Navy service member who is seriously ill/injured, missing, or deceased.

In the case of seriously ill or injured Navy members, notification of the NOK is typically accomplished by telephone. A Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO) is not routinely assigned; however, the Casualty Assistance Branch at the Bureau of Naval Personnel coordinates Government-funded travel of the NOK to the member's bedside, if their presence is deemed warranted by attending medical personnel.

In the event a service member dies or is missing, an active-duty officer or chief petty officer is assigned as a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO) to notify the NOK and to provide followup assistance as necessary. During the initial call upon the family, the CACO is usually accompanied by a chaplain, whose role it is to provide pastoral care and comfort to the grief-stricken family. The notification is always the responsibility of the CACO. **It is not appropriate for the ombudsman to accompany the CACO during the initial visit or to contact the family about a casualty situation prior to official CACO notification.**

As part of the services offered, the CACO and the chaplain will offer help from the member's command. If the family desires such assistance, the ombudsman will be contacted to lend support as appropriate and in coordination with the CACO and the chaplain. The family may require assistance such as help with answering the telephone, arranging for child care, shopping for groceries, or arranging for relatives to be met at the airport. These are just a few of the many areas in which the ombudsman can contribute significantly to seeing the family through the most difficult of times.

CASUALTY ASSISTANCE CALLS PROGRAM (CACO)

TRAINING

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING

Some ombudsmen who have received Basic Training and are then appointed as ombudsmen in a new area believe that it is not necessary to retake training in their new location. It is imperative that ombudsmen attend all training events in the area in which they are now serving.

This manual is not intended to replace your training. Rather, its purpose is to complement your training by helping you to get started prior to your attendance at formal training and by providing reference material afterwards. With training you will learn and grow on the job. The manual is intended to provide:

- An overview of the ombudsman position.
- Guidelines for establishing effective working relationships with key players.
- Basic information on Navy resources.
- General information sheets and shared learning from other ombudsmen.

Becoming an Effective Ombudsman

A critical responsibility that you assume in becoming an ombudsman is that you will gain competence doing your job. The basis of that competence is the standardized Basic and Advanced Training from the local Navy Family Service Center and ombudsman assembly, as well as attendance at the ongoing workshops and seminars.

Obtaining Your Training

According to OPNAVINST 1750.1D, your commanding officer is charged with ensuring that you receive ombudsman training—whenever possible, prior to assuming your responsibilities.

In order to be appointed, Navy family ombudsmen are **required** to receive training. Under the direction of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager (Pers-662), ombudsman training has been standardized to include:

- *Basic Training*

Basic Training is required of all ombudsmen. When possible, it should be provided prior to assuming the responsibilities of the position. This training encompasses things an ombudsman must know, such as: confidentiality, relationships with the command, communicating with the families, information and referral, basic deployment support, etc.

- *Advanced Training*

Advanced Training is required of all ombudsmen. It includes more specific and indepth training by subject-matter experts on topics such as the Family Advocacy Program (FAP), crisis response and management, stress/burnout, Navy core values, team building/networking, telephone effectiveness, grief, suicide, advocacy, deployment (emotional cycle of deployments, return and reunion issues), dealing with the media, and newsletter/communication.

- ***Ongoing Training***

Ombudsmen should continue to be trained throughout the duration of their appointment. This can be accomplished through appropriate ongoing training, which may include Navy-sponsored training such as Navy Information School, Total Quality Leadership, PREVENT (Personal Responsibilities, Values, Education and Training program), as well as Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society Training and other seminars and workshops provided through Family Service Centers and local ombudsman assemblies.

It is through the regular meetings sponsored by the assembly that information (especially about Navy resources) is updated and disseminated. These meetings are a form of inservice training and should be attended regularly. Despite the tremendous demands on your time, it is essential that you stay current with Navy policies and procedures, which are reviewed and updated during the training and regular meetings.

It is essential that ombudsmen fully comprehend and effectively deal with issues, such as confidentiality, cases of spouse/child abuse, potential suicide situations, as well as the many other circumstances that may be encountered during their tenure.

The Navy Family Support Program has published the Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide to assist your Navy Family Service Center, or the local ombudsman assembly in the absence of a supporting Navy Family Service Center, in preparing your training. This guide can be ordered by those responsible for training through Naval Publications and Forms Directorate. There is a limited supply at the Navy Wifeline Association.

Some ombudsmen who have received Basic Training and are then appointed as ombudsmen in a new area believe that it is not necessary to retake training in their new location. It is imperative that an ombudsman attend all training events in the area in which they are now serving. This training will help the ombudsman to:

- Meet local POCs.
- Gain local I&R resources.
- Understand local installation policies and procedures.

Family Service Centers and ombudsman assemblies who provide ombudsman training have a responsibility to schedule training appropriately, being creative with schedules and expectations, keeping in mind that many ombudsmen work full-time and have children at home.

For Naval Reserve ombudsmen, a course of instruction has been developed. The course is offered at the Naval Reserve Management School, Naval Support Activity, New Orleans, LA. Class convening dates will be announced periodically by both COMNAVRESFOR and the school.

This required training, normally provided through the FSC, is often unavailable for command ombudsmen, reserve ombudsmen, and recruit ombudsmen in isolated locations. Historically, commands have provided this training by the issuance of invitational travel orders (ITOs) to ombudsmen.

Because ombudsmen are volunteers providing a valuable service to the Navy, and because the Navy requires ombudsmen to attend training, it is the Navy's responsibility to ensure that ombudsmen are trained as per their governing instruction. It is the Navy's responsibility to provide up-front travel and per diem costs for those ombudsmen in isolated areas who attend Basic Training or those authorized to travel for the Navy to train others.

Commands may issue ITOs as authorized in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. ITOs shall be limited to command ombudsmen, reserve ombudsmen, and recruit ombudsmen from isolated locations to attend the nearest Family Service Center Ombudsman Basic Training event for the sole purpose of receiving required basic ombudsman training.

If provision for your training is not made, you should bring this to your command's attention so that you can adequately fulfill the command's expectations. NFSC Ombudsman Coordinators and ombudsman assemblies can provide information regarding the various trainings available.

OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLIES

OPNAVINST 1750.1D states: "To maintain consistency and standardization throughout the Navy, the term ombudsman assembly is designated as the official title for this ombudsman organization." With the distribution of this instruction, the term "council" will no longer be used.

An important element in the ombudsman program is the local ombudsman assembly. Established by base commanders or area coordinators in support of tenant commands, the assemblies perform important communication and support functions for the local command ombudsmen, all of whom are members of the assembly. The sponsoring command shall determine the makeup of the ombudsman assembly. Each sponsoring command is encouraged to have a local assembly instruction and place it on file for reference as appropriate with the Ombudsman Quality Management Board, via the Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662. When the ombudsman assembly is organized and the sponsoring command's instruction is in consonance with OPNAVINST 1750.1D, there is no need for elections and bylaws, and they are strongly discouraged. The Navy Family Service Center coordinates with the ombudsman assembly chairman to perform orientation for newly appointed ombudsmen. Because assemblies exist solely to provide information and support to ombudsmen and are not a social organization, there is no reason to hold elections of any kind.

According to OPNAVINST 1750.1D the functions of the assembly include:

FUNCTIONS OF THE OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLY

Resource for Training

The Navy Family Service Center is charged with providing standardized basic and ongoing ombudsman training for all ombudsmen within the enlarged area it serves. It is very helpful for ombudsman assemblies to clarify to the Navy Family Service Centers what specific resources are needed for their area, as well as any specialized training deemed important by the local commands. In the absence of a Navy Family Service Center, training responsibilities fall to the ombudsman assembly under the guidance of the ombudsman advisory board. For specific guidance on appropriate approved trainers, ombudsman advisory boards, as well as Navy Family Service Centers, should contact the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager for recommendations.

Assemblies can provide workshops on specialized topics in addition to their regular meetings as a source of continuous updating of new policy/procedures of Navy programs and other resources. The larger number of participants present at these functions allows access to speakers and trainers that otherwise might not be available to individual commands or smaller groups.

Facilitate Provision of Policy Clarification

The assembly can research and relay policy clarification by appropriate authorities (for example, NEX, Commissary, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, etc.) to the local ombudsmen. Serving as an area clearinghouse for materials and new information on resources, referrals, and policy/procedures, the assemblies help keep ombudsmen up-to-date and help circulate new ideas and innovations.

Assemblies are encouraged to forward ideas and innovations to the Ombudsman Quality Management Board via the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager during development, to clarify standardization of terminology and job descriptions involved.

Locally Written Publications

There are times when guides, booklets, or publications may be written in local areas in support of the ombudsman program. While these may be useful tools, any material published must be forwarded to the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager for chop/approval/policy verification **PRIOR TO PUBLICATION**.

Any locally written publications in support of the ombudsman program must be cleared through the BUPERS Ombudsman Program Manager prior to production and distribution.

Assistance to Commands for Recognition and Appreciation of Ombudsmen

This assistance can take the form of giving suggestions, providing a forum through its meetings and activities, or even by organizing an approved area-wide Ombudsman Appreciation Day. September 14th has been designated as Ombudsman Appreciation Day. Commands are encouraged to celebrate and appreciate the many efforts of their ombudsmen during that time, as well as when an ombudsman concludes his/her appointment. Navy Family Service Center Ombudsman Program Coordinators and local ombudsman assembly leadership have suggestions on the different ways a command might show appreciation.

Competitions that recognize the accomplishments of an individual ombudsman rather than promote the importance of the total Navy Family Ombudsman Program are inappropriate.

The ombudsman program itself is not a popularity contest. Because commands are so different, and the requirements placed upon individual ombudsmen are so complex, you cannot compare ombudsmen. It is impossible to determine that the quality of service a specific ombudsman provides is more valuable than another. Each command program is unique, requiring different levels of expectation and participation by the ombudsman. Therefore, there is no equal or fair basis upon which to establish an ombudsman of the area/month/quarter/year program.

Ombudsmen may not be reimbursed for incidental expenses. They must plan and budget with the command to ensure their needs are met.

Incidental expenses in support of the ombudsman program may be paid for with appropriated or nonappropriated funds when INCURRED BY THE COMMAND ONLY. This is at the discretion of the commanding officer and can be used for individual ombudsman appreciation dinners, ombudsman plaques and awards, refreshments provided for ombudsmen meetings, etc., not to exceed \$25.00 per ombudsman, per event.

Ombudsmen may not be reimbursed for incidental expenses. They must plan and budget with the command to ensure their needs and requirements are met, AS COMMAND RESOURCES PERMIT, as determined by the commanding officer.

Roster of Area Ombudsmen

The Navy Family Service Center is charged with maintaining an updated roster of local command ombudsmen. This roster is crucial in that it is the basis for keeping the Navy Family Service Center Ombudsman Program Coordinator informed and also ensures that the ombudsmen are included in all training and meeting activities. Local commands shall send copies of the appointment and termination or resignation letters to the Navy Family Service Center, Navy Wifeline Association, type commanders, etc., to ensure the roster remains updated. In the absence of a supporting Navy Family Service Center, the ombudsman assembly shall maintain the ombudsman roster.

Other Functions as Determined by Its Sponsor

An area newsletter to ombudsmen, provision of minutes from assembly meetings, calendar of events, and local resource materials are just a few examples of other functions that the ombudsman assembly might undertake.

The ombudsman assembly can play an important role for area family members' welfare by serving as an advocate on community policy matters with such organizations as the Child Care Center, Navy Exchange, Community Center, Navy Family Service Center, command family support team, etc. By bringing family member concerns, suggestions, and complaints to the attention of these organizations, services can be improved. Assembly representatives may be invited to serve on these committees.

If, as an ombudsman, you are asked or want to participate on a board or committee you must have the commanding officer's approval to do so. Remember, perception is reality. Once you have been appointed as ombudsman for a command, you are an ombudsman 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. People will assume that when you attend various meetings, you are acting in your official capacity.

Functions the Assembly Does Not Have

The ombudsman assembly is not a policy-making body, nor should it interfere in any way with the individual command/ombudsman relationship, including the appointment or dismissal of command ombudsmen. The ombudsman assembly must maintain neutrality in all matters between ombudsmen and their individual commands.

Although it may make recommendations on community policy matters that affect its command families, it may not petition or actively protest command initiated actions or policy.

By providing a forum for raising issues and mutual problem-solving, the assembly naturally becomes a network within which ombudsmen can seek support and counsel. **The assembly does not ever interfere in the relationship between the ombudsman and the command.** It can assist the ombudsman when problems arise in this area by listening and clarifying issues, as well as helping the ombudsman develop alternatives to address the problem.

The ombudsman assembly should not collect dues, or solicit or hold monies of any kind. The functions of the ombudsman assembly as clearly defined in OPNAVINST 1750.1D do not require the ombudsman assembly to have funds. They should not serve as a social club, community outreach service, food locker, or hospitality organization. There are many other organizations within the Navy structure to fill these needs (e.g., Navy Wives' Clubs, Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Armed Forces YMCA/YWCA, American Red Cross, etc.).

The ombudsman program itself is not a popularity contest. Because commands are so different, the requirements placed upon individual ombudsmen are so complex—you cannot compare ombudsmen. It is impossible to determine that the quality of service a specific ombudsman provides is more valuable than another. Each command program is unique requiring different levels of expectation and participation by ombudsman. Therefore, there is no equal or fair basis upon which to establish an ombudsman of the area/month/quarter/year program. **Contests such as Ombudsman of the Quarter, Ombudsman of the Month, and Ombudsman of the Year are inappropriate and should NOT take place.**

The ombudsman assembly is not a policy-making body. It should never interfere in any way with the individual command/ombudsman relationship.

The ombudsman assembly should not collect dues, solicit, or hold monies of any kind.

RECOMMENDED FORMAT FOR OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLY ORGANIZATION

The chair/coordinator should be the spouse of an active-duty service member currently serving a command within the sponsor membership; he/she does not have to be an active ombudsman currently serving a command, but should have appropriate experience for the position.

OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLY ADVISORY BOARD

The local ombudsman assembly will be comprised of all officially appointed ombudsmen. The CO, XO, CMC, chaplains, and their spouses may attend (and are encouraged to attend) assembly meetings and participate in training.

The recommended format for organizing assembly leadership is the chair/coordinator selected and appointed by the sponsoring command, an advisory board, and ombudsman representatives. Appointment for a specified term shall be in writing. The chair/coordinator should be the spouse of an active-duty service member currently serving a command within the sponsor membership; he/she does not have to be an active ombudsman currently serving a command, but should have appropriate experience for the position.

Often the chairman is requested to represent the sponsoring command and, by instruction, shall be appointed by that commanding officer. He/she may, upon the command's request, represent the sponsoring command on committees, boards, or group meetings as an information and referral liaison, an advocate for families, and a representative of the ombudsman members of the assembly. Because of the many duties he/she may have in the role of chair/coordinator, it is recommended that an additional ombudsman be appointed by the sponsoring command to meet the needs of the sponsoring command's staff families.

In fleet-intensive areas where the role of ombudsman assembly chairman is extensive and the chairman's workload would take time away from the command families' needs, command duties and ombudsman assembly duties may need to be split. That way, the command ombudsman can devote full attention to the command family members and the assembly chairman can devote full effort to the requirements of the assembly. The chair/coordinator's active-duty spouse must be attached to a command that is a member of the local assembly.

Each sponsoring command is encouraged to have a local ombudsman instruction charter and send a copy of it to the Ombudsman Quality Management Board, via the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager.

The sponsoring command may also establish an advisory board to support and advise the assembly, consisting of a spouse of a senior military member, a chaplain, a command master chief, ombudsman representation from the assembly, an action officer from the sponsor's staff, and any other interested and appropriately positioned person(s).

The advisory board may be charged with program planning, preparing and regularly updating the roster, and other duties as assigned.

The action officer from the sponsor's staff shall ensure that the assembly and the advisory board have the support they need to perform the requested duties, including materials and clerical assistance.

In some areas there may be legitimate reasons for the establishment of more than one assembly. For example, areas of large concentrations of deployable commands (e.g., ships, subs, airwings, etc.) may choose to have their ombudsmen meet periodically in separate assemblies (DESRON assembly, SUBRON assembly, AIRWING assembly), to talk about issues and concerns unique to their communities. Assemblies, however, should not see themselves as hierarchical, or as one assembly with more authority or power over another by perceived importance or rank of the sponsoring command.

ASSEMBLY-TO- ASSEMBLY RELATIONSHIPS

*Assemblies exist **ONLY** to resource, clarify, assist and recognize command ombudsmen in meeting the needs of their own command families.*

By instruction, assemblies have **no authority** to make policy, dictate, legislate, or in any way interfere with individual local command/ombudsman matters. Assemblies exist only to **RESOURCE, CLARIFY, ASSIST, AND RECOGNIZE** command ombudsmen in meeting the needs of their own command families.

EXAMPLE:

A base commander wishes to sponsor a local assembly. With concurrence from the type commander and appropriate tenant commands in the area, the base commander writes a local 1750 ombudsman instruction naming membership of the assembly, stating times of meetings and how the assembly will function (precluding the need for any type of bylaws, which in fact are highly discouraged). The instruction also appoints an advisory board and lists any additional functions the assembly will fulfill not outlined in OPNAVINST 1750.1D. All commands and their ombudsmen of the immediate geographical area are invited to participate in this base assembly. This ombudsman assembly functions to resource, clarify, and assist all local ombudsman and their commands on issues affecting service members and their families on the base.

At a later date, a commander of a carrier group wishes to establish an ombudsman assembly of all "afloat" ombudsmen to discuss issues and concerns in regards to deployment support and homecoming activities. With the concurrence and permission of appropriate commands, the commander writes a local instruction which invites all afloat ombudsmen to another assembly that meets on a separate occasion from the base assembly. Both assemblies exist in the same area and many individual ombudsmen and their commands are members of both assemblies. Each assembly fulfills separate and distinct needs. Neither assembly, however, has authority or precedence over the other, since by OPNAVINST 1750 assemblies have no authority to make policy, initiate action, or interfere with local commands or command ombudsmen.

For more clarification contact the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662.

OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLIES AND FAMILY SERVICE CENTERS

The Navy Family Ombudsman Program and Family Service Centers are complementary programs. Ombudsmen reach out to individual command family members. Family Service Centers are a resource for ombudsmen in carrying out their responsibilities, and offer support to ombudsmen in areas such as (but not limited to): coordination of ombudsman training, establishment of ombudsman support groups, provision of resources and information when individual family problems are presented to the ombudsman, assistance to commands in the effective use and recognition of ombudsmen, and maintenance of area ombudsman rosters.

While Family Service Centers have always been a resource for ombudsmen, they will now take a more proactive role in coordinating training for assemblies that support ombudsmen's educational and informational needs. Family Service Centers' Ombudsmen Program Coordinators will provide program guidance and policy clarification, as well as recommendations for ombudsman recognition, to commands upon request.

NAVY WIFELINE ASSOCIATION

The Navy Wifeline Association (NWA) is an all-volunteer, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization, dedicated to improving the quality of life for every sea service family. Established in 1965 by and for Navy spouses, the NWA has now expanded to include Marine Corps and Coast Guard families.

Navy Wifeline Association volunteers provide assistance, information and/or referral in all matters pertaining to the military or its lifestyle. NWA developed the Navywide ombudsman support network, the Ombudsman Journal, and the Ombudsman Network Advisory Committee (ONAC). Its chairman serves as Chief of Naval Operations Navywide Ombudsman-at-Large. These volunteers research, compile, write, and edit all NWA publications, coordinate educational seminars, and maintain a supplemental Navy Family Lifeline mailing list to ensure that all sea service families in isolated locations can receive the newspaper. NWA has established field representatives at bases around the world to serve as local points of contact.

The policies and programs of the Navy Wifeline Association are guided by a board of advisors which includes spouses of both senior officers and enlisted personnel and representatives of other service-oriented organizations. Every Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard spouse, family member, or active-duty/reserve service member is automatically a member of the Navy Wifeline Association with no membership fee or registration requirement.

The Navy Wifeline Association has a strong commitment to the Navy Family Ombudsman Program and Navy families. The association, through the chairman's role as Navywide Ombudsman-at-Large for the CNO, is the primary interactive support system for the worldwide ombudsman network. The NWA publishes the Ombudsman Journal quarterly. It is the communication link for you, the ombudsman, and provides a forum for you to share ideas, thoughts, questions, and concerns. BUPERS' Ombudsman Program Manager's column keeps you "in the loop" and current with policy clarification, everchanging resources, and special events.

The Navy Wifeline Association is the organization currently maintaining a master roster of worldwide ombudsmen. Ombudsmen are required to send copies of appointment and resignation letters to keep the NWA informed of any changes in the roster. Ombudsmen must also inform the NWA of name and command address changes as soon as the change takes place. When your appointment letter is forwarded to the Navy Wifeline Association, your name and address will be added to the Ombudsman Journal mailing list.

To request free printed materials or for more information, call or write:

The Navy Wifeline Association
901 M Street SE, Building 172
Washington Navy Yard
Washington, DC 20374-5067

Telephone: (202) 433-2333, DSN 288-2333
Fax: (202) 433-4622

Office hours are Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
EST/EDT. Leave a message on the answering machine if you call after hours.

The Navy Wifeline Association provides many publications free of charge for distribution to individuals or groups. Suggestions and comments to keep the materials current and meaningful are invited. Unless otherwise indicated the publications are written, revised, published, and distributed by the Navy Wifeline Association volunteers.

NAVY WIFELINE ASSOCIATION PUBLICATIONS

Navy Family Lifeline is a quarterly newspaper for Navy and Marine Corps spouses and family members, edited and published by the Naval Media Center Publishing Division (previously NIRA). Articles written or suggested by spouses from all over the world are always welcome and should be sent to Naval Media Center Publishing Division, Naval Station Anacostia, Building 168, 2701 South Capitol Street SE, Washington, DC 20374-5077. Lifeline is distributed in bulk mailings to the Ombudsman/Key Volunteer Network, ships, stations, exchanges, hospitals, and commissaries by NIRA. Individual and bulk mailings to spouse groups, clubs, and others are available through the Navy Wifeline Association. The summer edition of Lifeline outlines rights and benefits available to sea service families.

The Ombudsman Journal is a quarterly newsletter by and for ombudsman/key volunteers worldwide, containing the most current resource information, as well as articles of general interest. It is available only through the Navy Wifeline Association.

Sea Legs is a handbook for Navy spouses. Both the seasoned Navy spouse and the newcomer will find useful information on matters such as family support services, rights, privileges or benefits, moving, health and medical care, personal finances, social customs and courtesies, and deployments. History, mission, and structure of the Navy, a Naval terms glossary, and a list of resource addresses are included in this booklet. Revisions are coordinated with Navy Wifeline Association volunteers. Sea Legs is published by the Bureau of Naval Personnel and distributed through both the NWA and the Publications and Forms Directorate in Philadelphia.

What's Next? A Guide to Family Readiness for the Naval Reserve is a handbook for Naval Reserve spouses with information on family, financial, medical, and personal support assistance available to them. This booklet is published by Educational Publications Incorporated and is available through the Navy Wifeline Association.

What's Next? A Guide to Family Readiness for the U.S. Marine Corps is a handbook for Marine Corps spouses with information on family, financial, medical, and personal support assistance available to them. This booklet is published by Educational Publications Incorporated and is available through the Marine Corps Family Support Program or the Navy Wifeline Association.

Balancing Life and Work is a handbook for the Coast Guard spouse with pertinent information on all matters concerning the Coast Guard family. This booklet is published by Educational Publications Incorporated and covers family assistance, financial matters, medical and health benefits, and many other topics. It is available from the Coast Guard Family Support program or your command.

Social Customs and Traditions of the Sea Services is a concise booklet to acquaint the spouse with some of the social customs, traditions, and organizations which are part of the sea services community.

Guidelines for the Spouses of Commanding and Executive Officers contains information and helpful suggestions to assist the new CO or XO spouse.

Guidelines for the Spouses of Command Master Chiefs or Chiefs of the Boat offers helpful hints and information.

Overseasmanship is a booklet that assists service members and their families in preparing for and enjoying an overseas tour. This booklet is also most helpful to the unmarried service member. It is published by the Bureau of Naval Personnel and is distributed by both the Navy Wifeline Association and the Publications and Forms Directorate in Philadelphia.

Launching Clubs and Support Groups gives suggestions on how to start a new club or support group, as well as ideas for activities and projects for those already established.

Financial and Personal Affairs will assist and guide in planning and managing financial and personal matters. It will also familiarize the user with the various resources available which can assist and/or teach in the management and handling of personal spending, income, and expenses, while enabling the reader to work toward financial stability.

Navy Wives Clubs of America is an informational brochure about national organizations for enlisted spouses only.

Navy Wifeline Association Portfolios include Sea Legs, Social Customs and Traditions of the Sea Services, Financial and Personal Affairs, Welcome Aboard, and a current copy of the Lifeline newspaper, as well as various other information brochures about NWCA, NMFA, Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society, Navy Family Service Centers, military lodgings, and other subjects concerning family member benefits. They are available in individual or bulk orders, free of charge from the Navy Wifeline Association.

OMBUDSMAN QUALITY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Membership of the OQMB shall include, but not be limited to: the Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager; Chaplain Advisor (Pers-6/66 Chaplain); the two Navy-wide Ombudsmen-at-Large; ombudsman representatives from Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Commander in Chief, U.S. Naval Forces Europe, Chief of Naval Education and Training, Commander Naval Recruiting Command, and Commander, Naval Reserve Force; at least one commanding officer (from any claimancy/community); two fleet/force master chiefs; and others appointed by Pers-6 as necessary; reference (c) applies.

The functions of the OQMB can include advising the Bureau of Naval Personnel Ombudsman Program Manager as appropriate, reviewing and recommending revision of pertinent instructions and manuals, and perhaps most importantly, providing suggestions to improve the standardization and support of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program worldwide.

The ombudsman program has changed a great deal since its inception, expanding in many directions. Changes and innovations are highly encouraged; however, closer supervision of its development is now necessary.

Flexibility within the individual commanding officer's control is perhaps the most important aspect of the ombudsman program and the Navy itself. However, basic standardization of terminology, definitions, and job descriptions is essential, with continuous review of the program to meet the needs of the everchanging force and to maintain the deliberate, well-considered flexibility and commanding officer's control of the program.

The members, by virtue of their position, bring to the board experience and current familiarity with the needs of the families around the world. The varied membership will enable the board to consider issues from all perspectives and provide advice that will balance the needs of the ombudsman program with the needs of the Navy.

Inquiries and correspondence concerning the OQMB should be addressed to:

Navy Family Ombudsman Program Manager, Pers-662
Department of the Navy
Bureau of Naval Personnel
Washington, DC 20370-6620

SPOUSE CLUBS/SUPPORT GROUPS AND THE OMBUDSMAN

*The Navy Wifeline
Association's booklet
Guidelines for Launching
Clubs and Support Groups
and Robert's Rules of
Order are valuable tools
for organizing and
maintaining support
groups and spouse clubs.*

Almost as important as having an ombudsman for the command is having support groups/spouse clubs to meet the social and support needs of the command families. Because of the importance of keeping ombudsman and spouse club roles distinct, commands should have someone other than the ombudsman be responsible for these social activities. However, in the absence of spouse clubs/support groups, any activity or service that promotes the welfare of the command families may be included in the ombudsman program, at the discretion of the commanding officer.

The ombudsman position is not a social one. The ombudsman is excluded from organizing social activities for the command. If the ombudsman is requested to start a support group, it is recommended that another person be designated as soon as possible to continue the coordination of the group events, etc.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups range from informal to more formal organizations of spouses within the command. All command support groups, informal or formal, **MUST** be endorsed by the commanding officer.

When support groups are started, it is important to be clear about the expectations of the members. These groups can meet social needs for camaraderie, companionship, and up-to-date information, and serve as a forum to relieve loneliness and stress during unit separations within an undemanding setting. Support groups are usually more active when the command deploys. Once the unit returns, the support group may diminish the number of get-togethers or activities. In any case, the group is fulfilling its purpose as long as the members are happy with it.

A support group usually requires no dues or formal elected positions. If a committee is required, members volunteer as needed. In some support groups, the members have decided to have a chairman or co-chairmen responsible for scheduling events, etc. Remember, all support group activities, both official and unofficial, **MUST BE ENDORSED** by the commanding officer.

The Ombudsman's Role

If the ombudsman is requested by the commanding officer to start a support group, it is recommended that another person be designated as soon as possible to continue the coordination of the group events, etc. The ombudsman should be an active participant in the support group, but because of their full-time commitment to the command as ombudsman, may not have enough time to hold a leadership position. Remember, perception is reality. Once the ombudsman has been appointed, people will assume when he/she attends various meetings that the ombudsman is acting on the behalf of the command or in his/her official capacity.

The command-sponsored support group which is willing to arrange meetings and other social events is a tremendous help to the ombudsman, especially during deployments. The support group leader can ask the ombudsman for speaker referrals and program suggestions and can make all of the necessary arrangements, leaving the ombudsman free to continue normal duties. The ombudsman can advertise the events in the newsletter, with reservations being taken by the appropriate support group member. Working together they can meet most of the families needs, without either one becoming overwhelmed with duties and expectations.

The ombudsman may:

- Be a supporter of command-sponsored groups and activities.
- Be a resource person for information and referral to any group.
- Advertise support group/spouse club activities as permitted by the commanding officer.
- Participate in groups, but not be part of the spouse club/support group leadership.

A spouse club is similar to a support group but functions under more structured guidelines.

SPOUSE CLUBS

A formal club must have the commanding officer's approval for formation, membership requirements, election of officers, and a definite structure as specified in a constitution and bylaws. The constitution, bylaws, and membership requirements should have the CO's approval after scrutiny by the command legal officer.

The Ombudsman's Role

- May be a supporter of command-sponsored groups and activities.
- May be a resource person for information and referral to any group.
- May advertise support group/spouse club activities as permitted by the commanding officer.
- Should not be a social director or assume the duties of a spouse club/support group leader.

IMPACT OF COMMAND DIFFERENCES ON THE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

There are important differences between different types of commands that have important consequences for ombudsmen. The purpose of this section is to highlight some of the effects these differences make for the ombudsman and suggest some of the program individualization that may occur.

LARGE-SMALL COMMANDS

The most important factor influencing the ombudsman program is the commanding officer. Perhaps the second most important factor is size. Some differences that size can produce include:

- ***Number of Ombudsmen Needed To Serve the Command***
Obviously, a larger command will require more ombudsmen to adequately serve it. This in turn raises questions of how the program will be structured and the relationship among the ombudsmen. It also introduces the complexity of teamwork, cooperation, and coordination.
- ***Familiarity With the Families***
Small commands permit getting to know all the families. Creating a family atmosphere is possible. In larger commands it is more limited. You may only get to know those families that call and seek help.
- ***Communication***
Maintaining phone trees and verifying rosters is extremely difficult in large commands. Ombudsmen in commands of this size must depend on their newsletters and taped messages for getting information out to the families. Keeping the roster updated is a far more difficult and time-consuming process in larger commands; assistance can be obtained from the command itself to initially set up the roster and help maintain it.
- ***Chaplains***
Chaplains are directly assigned to larger commands, while this is not the case with smaller commands.
- ***Outreach Programs***
Larger commands may have outreach programs already in place, while ombudsmen in smaller commands often have to develop these services. Ombudsmen in smaller commands who need assistance may request it from the nearest assembly.
- ***Established Systems and Methods***
Ombudsmen in some commands often must develop operating procedures and systems that are already ongoing in other commands. Ombudsman assemblies are good resources for recommendations and information-sharing to assist others to set up new systems.

TYPE OF COMMAND

Each type of command has its own patterns and personality. The different rhythms of deployment are particularly important in terms of the consequences for ombudsmen. The job of the ombudsman begins in earnest when the command (or some of its members) deploys. In addition to the normal family support activities already being done, ombudsman preparation for and participation in pre-deployment, deployment, return, homecoming, and reunion briefings can be invaluable.

Submarine Commands

Deployment means very limited contact between the crew and their families: no mail, messages, or calls home, except when the submarine is in port. There is almost no possibility of a crewmember being returned home during the cruise, irrespective of how severe the emergency is at home. Consequently, families are totally cut off from their spouses' support. This could increase the need for the ombudsman should problems arise. Because communication is severely limited, the messages that families do send should be positive in nature. The families can send "familygrams" periodically.

There is an important difference between the fast attack deployments, which are not highly predictable in occurrence, and the fleet ballistic missile (FBM) patrols, which have a regular deployment-return cycle. The pattern of the former can mean that it is difficult for the families to fully complete the emotional cycle of deployment.

Generally the squadron or group staff do not go to sea. Their presence during deployment of the boats is an additional resource and source of support for the ombudsman. They are often able to provide information on the boat's well-being which can be reassuring to the families.

The small size of the submarine commands means that a close-knit sense of family is more easily established. The ombudsman must be particularly diligent in deflecting and refuting rumors.

Surface Commands

Surface commands vary in deployment pattern and mission, and offer unique challenges for the ombudsman. Your ship may be an element of the carrier battle group, the logistics and support group, or mine countermeasures unit, for example. Once deployed, the ships may remain together for an exercise or, more likely, may be assigned individual missions or port calls. This can affect the flow of mail, personnel transfers, and emergency leave.

It is important that each ombudsman understand the various opportunities for and limitations on communicating with the ship when it is deployed. Letter mail, Class Easy messages, and telephone calls (when the ship is in port) are the normal means of communication. The ombudsman may ask the group or readiness squadron staff at the ship's home port to send a Naval message to the ship's commanding officer.

When a ship accompanies an aircraft carrier, mail service is good. Mail is flown to and from the carrier and then distributed to the escorts. But if ships are assigned individual missions or port calls apart from the battle group, the flow of mail slows, as it must be forwarded to the next port of call or be transferred to a support ship on the next replenishment.

Emergency leave cases are affected in the same manner. If a ship is operating alone, it may take some time to transfer a service member ashore.

During a crisis there is the possibility that surface ships could become the object of media attention. This could become a source of rumors and speculation as news of the event trickles back to the families from both official and non-official sources. Direct communication with the ship under the circumstances may be impossible. Ombudsmen should stay in contact with Navy officials at the ship's home port and rely on the PAO assigned to the story. It is recommended that these ombudsmen have Advanced Training by the command PAO on appropriate interaction with and reactions to the media.

The most difficult times for the ombudsman may come during deployment. A commanding officer comes to depend on the ombudsman who keeps the lines of communication open, and appreciates the positive effect it has on the morale onboard ship.

With permission of the commanding officer, surface command ombudsmen are strongly encouraged to develop close working relationships with ombudsmen of the embarked air squadrons, detachments, groups, and wings, and the key volunteer supporting the families of the Marine Corps personnel attached to the surface commands.

Air Commands

The manner in which an air command deploys affects communications and thus the ombudsmen. When an air wing deploys on a carrier, its constituent squadrons may be pulled from bases other than that of the carrier itself, which complicates communications.

A deploying air wing, consisting of squadrons from various geographic areas, will be commanded by a commander of the air wing, traditionally referred to as a CAG. Some air wing personnel remain at the base and are available to provide support services. Prior to deployment the squadron commanding officer should arrange a meeting between the wing commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, liaison officer, and the squadron's commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief spouses, and ombudsmen. Administrative support and assistance with sending and receiving "need-to-know" messages are the types of support that the ombudsman can expect from the wing.

The "communications pipeline" is the other aspect of deployment that the ombudsman must master. The CAG has a liaison at AIRLANT/AIRPAC—the force chaplain—with whom he/she communicates. Upon receiving a message, the force chaplain calls the CAG or deputy CAG's spouse, who calls the squadron commanding officers' spouses, who in turn contact the squadron ombudsman. If the ombudsman ever has a question concerning the ship's movement or a crisis, he/she should contact the wing first and then the force chaplain or the PAO.

Contacting the carrier's ombudsmen is also highly recommended for squadron ombudsmen, with the commanding officer's permission. Ombudsmen from other locations with units attached to the carrier should also contact the carrier's ombudsmen, after gaining permission from their commanding officers. The carrier's base Navy Family Service Center can provide the names of the carrier's ombudsmen. If the carrier has a Careline, this number should be noted and called periodically by the ombudsman as a source of updates and news.

Returning from the deployment, the planes arrive at their home base, usually 24 hours prior to the ship's return to port. Flights will be arranged for the remaining personnel of the squadron from the carrier's home port to the squadron's base. Arrangements can be made for the ombudsman to receive the manifest of personnel arriving on the flights 24 hours prior to their return. The ombudsman in turn will get this information to the families. The manifest is also posted in the ready room.

The creation of the sea operations detachment within the aviation intermediate maintenance detachment (SeaOpDet/AIMD) places an added responsibility on the air station ombudsmen. SeaOpDet personnel belong to the air station CO, but are temporarily assigned to the carrier during deployment. The air station ombudsman is the designated ombudsman for their families. In order to serve them, the ombudsman should take the initiative to connect with the air wing communications pipeline and be included in communications to and from the ship.

Shore Commands

Family Role Readjustment

As the family transfers from a sea command where the military member has experienced absences from the home to a shore command, family members must redefine their relationships. Previously the spouse has been managing the household and has been the primary person to deal with the children. Now this will change with the member's return to permanent residence in the home. Often children begin competing for the service member's attention now that he/she is a permanent figure in the home.

- ***Loss of the Informal Navy Family Support System***

Members of shore commands may be in a Navy or a civilian community. Dispersion, housing and working among civilians, and fewer Navy social connections can contribute to an erosion of the support network that spouses may have had previously in a more tightly organized deploying command.

- ***Increased Time Working***

Spouses may be working, and the Navy member may be moonlighting to make ends meet. This can create the additional stresses of the two-career family.

- ***Difficulty Maintaining Current Rosters***

Personnel reporting in to shore commands tend to do so with temporary addresses while searching for housing and forget to update their personnel records when they finally move into their home. Since many of them do not deploy during this tour, they don't experience the normal pre-deployment shakedown that updates all records immediately prior to departure. You may need to be very creative in keeping your roster complete, current, and accurate.

It is often the shore command ombudsman that supports deployed ombudsmen in times of command emergencies or natural disasters.

- ***Separation***

Units or individuals within shore commands do deploy just as seagoing commands do. There is also temporary additional duty (TAD) that can take the Navy member away from home. Commuter and dual-career separations can reduce the time the family has together and their energy to cope with family issues and problems.

- ***Isolation***

If the Navy member has to commute to work and the family lives off-base with only a single car, the spouse can be isolated and feel cut-off.

- ***Grievances***

For shore-based facilities where most of the families are stable and spouses present, the ombudsman function tends to focus more on information and referral and on handling grievances with local services and facilities. The ombudsman can also become involved in general efforts to improve the quality of life for families.

Overseas Commands

There are unique problems that present special challenges to ombudsmen in overseas commands. The major challenges involve isolation, communication, and transportation. In some areas there is very limited or no phone service, and transportation is often limited or nonexistent. In these situations ombudsmen must come up with creative ways to overcome obstacles.

Here are some guidelines to help ombudsmen in overseas commands operate an effective program:

- Playing a complementary role in the sponsor program for new arrivals gives you early access to the incoming families. Request that the command notify you when word is received on new orders and make certain that a copy of your introductory letter is included in the sponsor packet that is mailed prior to arrival. If getting your letter to new families prior to their arrival is not possible, do so immediately after they arrive.
- Develop ways to facilitate family entry into the new community and suggest to your commanding officer ideas to enhance this entry process. You may need to take on the role as advocate for the families.

- Provide a point of contact for Navy personnel and their families who are temporarily located at an overseas station. This will provide a communication link with the ombudsman at the base command. Cross-services networking via ombudsmen can provide additional family and service member support.
- Be positive in your comments about the command and the locale and give realistic expectations relative to the overseas living situation. When mentioning negative things, try to include a solution as well (e.g., "The water is awful here so most of us buy bottled water from _____" or "The commissary gets Pampers every three months so stock up when they come in," etc.).
- Recognize that your enthusiasm may have waned due to the daily hassles associated with overseas living. Everyone will feel this way from time to time. Have a good friend that you can share your own feelings with so that you can present a balanced and positive picture for the new arrivals. Being a positive influence on family morale is an important ombudsman function.
- Organize other unit spouses to assist you in welcoming new families. Try to have someone meet with them as soon as they arrive, especially when they are in guest quarters or a hotel. This is the best time to provide information about base services, and it can be critical when sponsor and family are not well-matched (e.g., a family with school-age children assigned to a bachelor sponsor).
- Encourage newcomers to participate in base and intercultural orientation programs. Stress this invaluable opportunity to get well-equipped to meet and even enjoy the challenges of overseas living. If child care is available for these programs, advise newcomers; otherwise, advocate to have it provided.

Ombudsmen are especially encouraged to take local language classes. You should encourage command family members to do the same. Using a few "market phrases" increases one's ability to get around and to enjoy the local culture.

There are always some families who will be reticent about going outside their home or base compound to experience the local culture. As an ombudsman you have the opportunity to set an example and to encourage others to take advantage of local cultural experiences. Encourage settled members of the command to include newcomers in their outings and use the newsletter to publicize local events, especially intercultural activities organized by the Navy Family Service Center and recreation departments.

If a phone tree is impossible to organize, set up a "people tree" instead. Have family members contact one another in person to pass on information. Organize your "people tree" as you would a phone tree, with people contacting others living in the same area.

As an ombudsman you need to be knowledgeable about local laws and regulations which impact on the families (e.g., child care, driving, employment, curfew, etc.). This information is available through command orientation, the Navy Family Service Center I&R specialist, and the base legal and public affairs offices. It is helpful to publicize this information in the newsletter but be sure to check its accuracy first.

Establish a communications network with other ombudsmen in the region. Exchanging newsletters will provide new ideas and coping strategies. Sharing information, ideas, and problem solutions will enhance everyone's effectiveness and help you feel a part of a wider network.

A Word of Caution

Small overseas bases tend to become "goldfish bowls." If you share problem situations with other ombudsmen, you **must** be careful to discuss the situation only in general terms and not disclose details that could identify the people involved. Confidentiality rules **MUST** apply.

Remote sites may leave you feeling like you are out there on your own as an ombudsman. Bring to the attention of the command any training opportunities offered that would enhance your ability to be an effective ombudsman. In accordance with OPNAVINST 1750.1D, commands are encouraged to use invitational travel orders (ITOs) to provide training for ombudsmen. Contact the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager for further information regarding ITOs.

Recruiting Commands/Districts/Zones

Serving within a recruiting command entails unique stresses, problems, and rewards for the ombudsman. These include:

- ***Expectations***

Serving in Navy recruiting is a new experience, totally foreign to the military member's normal career path and unlike any other assignment. There are many rewards in recruiting, and the family can share in the recognition if they get involved in the member's work.

- ***Family Life***

Demands and pressures of the job will affect the quantity but should not affect the quality of time with the family. It is important that the family become knowledgeable about the member's job to better understand the stress, fatigue, and frustrations of recruiting duty.

- ***Personal Finances***

Recruiters receive special duty assignment pay (SDAP) and a monthly allowance for out-of-pocket expenses. Unfortunately, in high-cost areas these special pays and allowances do not completely offset the actual costs the recruiter incurs.

- ***Isolation***

Because of the distances and scattered placement of the recruiters, there is little opportunity to get together (which is true for the ombudsmen as well). Being in the civilian world means that there are few, if any, friends around with military experience who can really understand the family's situation. Therefore, ombudsmen should encourage families to become involved with local communities. In addition to a lack of personal supports, most of the recruiters are far from the institutional support agencies and services they are accustomed to on bases.

Adaptation of the Ombudsman Program to Recruiting Commands

COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1 series gives specific guidance to the Recruiting Command Ombudsman Program. COMNAVCRUITCOM has also established a plan of action which is to be updated at each annual conference.

- ***Organizational Structure***

An essential way of structuring the program is to have an ombudsman in each zone, as well as a command and staff ombudsman residing at the same location as the commanding officer. The command ombudsman is the primary liaison between the commanding officer and the zone ombudsmen, but this does not prevent the zone ombudsman from contacting the commanding officer directly on major issues. The command shall have an experienced ombudsman who is not assigned to any particular zone, but who can cover vacant zones during absences or between appointments.

- ***Welcome Aboard***

Welcome Aboard materials are particularly important and valuable for incoming families. They should include such things as: maps, information on the city, its housing, the utilities, real estate agents and listings, history and background; a recent newsletter; a welcome letter from the zone and command ombudsmen; a listing of local (civilian) resources with telephone numbers such as the American Red Cross, hotlines, drug and alcohol counseling, mental health and medical facilities that accept CHAMPUS; the information packet from the nearest military base (not necessarily Navy); and a listing of the department heads in the command. In addition to sending the materials, contacting the family within two weeks of detaching from the previous command (personally or by phone) to welcome and get to know them is important.

- ***Providing Support***

All ombudsmen should be proactive and call every spouse in their zone at least once a month. This provides at least an opportunity for the spouse to talk with another Navy sponsor on a regular basis. If possible, social get-togethers (planned by someone other than the ombudsman) such as zone picnics can be very useful for reducing the sense of isolation. These social gatherings also allow the ombudsmen and their spouses to get to know one another on a more personal basis, and to begin to develop trust.

- *Newsletter*

The newsletter takes on a special importance under these circumstances. A regular, well-done newsletter can both reduce the feelings of isolation and help keep the families up-to-date on command news and available resources.

Information and Referral

Resource Files

As you most likely will have no local Navy Family Service Center on which to rely for Information & Referral resources, it will be necessary to establish your own files. Contact local community or county I&R services (e.g., Department of Social Services, Public Health Service, Chamber of Commerce, City Information Office, etc.) to obtain lists of community resources.

The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, Inc. (AIRS) publishes a directory of information and referral services in the United States and Canada. Your nearest Navy Family Service Center should have a copy of this directory for your reference in case you need to obtain referral information for distant locations. Reserve/recruit commands may wish to obtain a copy of this directory for local support in the absence of a Navy Family Service Center.

Establishing Contact With Nearest Navy Family Service Center and the Navy Wifeline Association

You are not out there on your own. Help is as close as your phone. Contact your nearest Navy Family Service Center and get the names of staff members with whom you can consult when you need assistance with families' problems. Having phone numbers for the nearest Army Community Service Center, Air Force Family Support Center, Marine Corps Family Service Center or Navy Family Service Center is also helpful. Contact the Navy Family Support Program in Washington, DC (202-694-1006 or DSN 224-1006) for information and phone numbers for the centers nearest you. The CNO's Navy Family Ombudsman-at-Large may be contacted at the Navy Wifeline Association at 202-433-2333, DSN 288-2333.

Ombudsman Training

Basic Training is required for all ombudsmen and Advanced Training is recommended. Training is especially essential where you do not have the support of local military facilities and services. Your command is authorized to issue invitational travel orders to send you to training or to bring trainers to your command. Contact your nearest Navy Family Service Center or the Recruiting Command Ombudsman Program Manager for information and schedules of both Basic and Recruiting Command Ombudsman Training.

Command Support

Good command support demonstrated by providing administrative and logistical support, providing training, and promoting ombudsman visibility is essential to operating an effective ombudsman program in recruiting commands.

On the following 14 pages you will find a copy of COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1B.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
NAVY RECRUITING COMMAND
801 N. RANDOLPH STREET
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22203-1977

IN REPLY REFER TO

COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1B
00J

JAN 13 1994

COMNAVCRUITCOM INSTRUCTION 1754.1B

From: Commander, Navy Recruiting Command

Subj: NAVY RECRUITING COMMAND OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 1750.1C - Navy Family Ombudsman Program
(b) The Navy Family Ombudsman Manual (NAVPERS 15571)
(c) The Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide (NAVPERS 15519)
(d) Command Guide for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program (NAVPERS 15601)
(e) COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 5400.2C - Standard Operating Procedures Manual
(f) COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1130.8D - Enlisted Recruiting Manual
(g) COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 4400.1 - Logistics Support Manual (LSM)

Encl: (1) Navy Recruiting Command Ombudsman Flow Chart
(2) Ombudsman Information and Referral, NAVCRUIT 1754/1
(3) Resources and Assistance List

1. Purpose. To revise policy and procedures for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program within the Navy Recruiting Command. The Ombudsman Program is a Mobile Inspection Training Team (MITT) inspectable item and should be included in turnover procedures.

2. Cancellation. COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1A. Due to numerous changes, marginal notations are not included. Read this instruction in its entirety.

3. Background. Detailed information on the Navy Family Ombudsman Program is available in references (a) through (d) which may be ordered through the Navy supply system per NFPC P-2002D. Information on the Navy Recruiting Command mission, structure, and operating procedures is available in reference (e), at any recruiting facility.

4. Discussion. Reference (a) discusses responsibility for establishing an Ombudsman program. It is the Navy's and Commander, Navy Recruiting Command's intent that commanding officers will implement and actively maintain an Ombudsman program. The geographic dispersion of recruiting personnel requires overt efforts to reinforce that the Navy, as a family, takes care of its own. The morale and job performance of Navy recruiting personnel is closely related to the health and morale of their families. Their quality of life is critical to the ability of Navy Recruiting Command to meet its mission. As the official representative of Navy recruiting families and single members, the Ombudsman plays a key role in sustaining open

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communication among the Navy, the recruiters, and their families. This will greatly improve the commanding officer's ability to prevent problems before they begin.

5. Organization

a. Navy Recruiting Command's Ombudsman Program is structured as follows. COMNAVCRUITCOM will appoint the National Ombudsman, a spouse from recruiting command at large and the program manager who is a military member assigned to COMNAVCRUITCOM staff and will fill the position as a collateral duty. In addition, there will be a separate staff Ombudsman who is a representative of the personnel assigned to the headquarters. Each Area Commander will appoint an Area Ombudsman and an Area Staff Ombudsman. Commanding Officer, Navy Recruiting Orientation Unit will, at a minimum, appoint a staff Ombudsman. If possible, a second Ombudsman should be appointed to work directly with the student population. Each District Commanding Officer shall appoint a command Ombudsman. In addition, District Commanding Officers will appoint an Ombudsman to represent each Zone in the District. The Command Ombudsman directly represents the Commander or Commanding Officer. Zone Ombudsmen access the Commanding Officer via the Command Ombudsman. However, in the case of emergency, Zone Ombudsmen may directly access the Commanding Officer. Ombudsmen can be geographically separate from the appointing officer's staff location. Enclosure (1) is an Ombudsman communication flow chart.

b. References (a) and (b) provide guidance for the establishment of an Ombudsman Council. Navy Recruiting Command will be structured as follows:

(1) COMNAVCRUITCOM Ombudsman Council will be composed of the Deputy Commander, who will serve as Council Coordinator; the National, COMNAVCRUITCOM staff and NORU Ombudsmen; the Headquarters and Command Master Chiefs; and the Program Manager.

(2) Area Ombudsman Council will be composed of the Area Chief Staff Officers, who will serve as Council Coordinators; the Area and Staff Ombudsmen; and the Command Master Chief.

(3) District Commanding Officers may, at their discretion, establish councils with similar composition.

6. Duties. The following functions describe the primary responsibilities of the respective Ombudsman positions.

a. Program Manager

(1) Conduct policy interface with OPNAV Ombudsman Program Manager, Family Service Center Program Managers and the Navy Wifeline office.

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- (2) Advise COMNAVCRUITCOM on Ombudsman program trends, policies and training.
- (3) Serve on the COMNAVCRUITCOM Command Council.
- (4) Coordinate distribution of information.
- (5) Function as the principle point of contact for National Ombudsman and COMNAVCRUITCOM Staff Ombudsman.
- (6) Coordinate program changes with National Ombudsman.
- (7) Coordinate National training workshops and conferences.

b. COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman

- (1) Conduct policy interface with OPNAV Ombudsman Program Manager, COMNAVCRUITCOM Ombudsman Program Manager, Family Service Center Program Managers and the Navy Wifeline office.
- (2) Advise COMNAVCRUITCOM on Ombudsman program trends, policies and training.
- (3) Coordinate the design and conduct, as necessary, recruiting Ombudsman training. Serve as a trainer for Area/NORU/COMNAVCRUITCOM Staff Ombudsman and trainer-at-large.
- (4) Serve on the COMNAVCRUITCOM Command Council.
- (5) Coordinate distribution of information.
- (6) Function as the principle point of contact and resource person for Area/Command/COMNAVCRUITCOM Staff/NORU Ombudsman.
- (7) Coordinate program changes with COMNAVCRUITCOM Ombudsman Program Manager.
- (8) Provide briefings to students in the Zone Supervisor course, Career Recruiting Force (CRF) Academy and Recruiting Officer Management Orientation (ROMO) course on the Ombudsman program as warranted.
- (9) Maintain updated resource files.

c. COMNAVCRUITCOM Staff Ombudsman

- (1) Serve on the COMNAVCRUITCOM Command Council.
- (2) Function as an additional point of contact for the Area Command Ombudsman.

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(3) Act as an advisor to the COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman.

(4) Attend training as specified by COMNAVCRUITCOM.

(5) Regularly provide contact services to COMNAVCRUITCOM staff family, spouses and single members in addition to active participation in the command orientation program.

(6) Liaison with Deputy Commander to attain administrative support, and other items/materials needed to carry out the program.

(7) Maintain updated resource files.

d. NCRU Command Ombudsman

(1) Act as an additional source for Ombudsmen training.

(2) Attend training as specified by COMNAVCRUITCOM.

(3) Encourage completion of enclosure (2) by all students attending NORU and forward to the appropriate NAVCRUITDIST Ombudsman. This information is needed in addition to the sponsor program.

(4) Provide briefings to students in the Zone Supervisor course, Career Recruiting Force (CRF) Academy, Navy Enlisted Recruiting Orientation (ENRO) and Recruiting Officer Management Orientation (ROMO) course on the Ombudsman Program. Provide feedback on student briefings to COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman after each briefing.

(5) Serve on the COMNAVCRUITCOM Command Council.

(6) Interface with the COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman, at a minimum, once per month.

(7) Maintain updated resource files.

e. Area Command Ombudsman

(1) Serve as a trainer for the District Command Ombudsmen and assist with District Ombudsmen training.

(2) Attend training as specified by COMNAVCRUITCOM.

(3) Serve as resource and advisory person for District Ombudsmen.

(4) Coordinate distribution of information.

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- (5) Interface with Area Commander on a monthly basis.
- (6) Liaison with CSO to attain administrative support, and other items/materials needed to carry out the program.
- (7) Interface with Commanding Officers, Command Master Chiefs, Chief Recruiters, Zone Supervisors, and Recruiters in Charge at Area training sessions.
- (8) Originate an Ombudsman newsletter to District Command Ombudsmen on a monthly/quarterly basis.
- (9) Interface with the COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman on a monthly basis.
- (10) Advise and/or participate in Area command "Sponsor" and "Welcome Aboard" orientation programs.
- (11) Maintain updated resource files.

f. Area Staff Ombudsman

- (1) Coordinate distribution of information and serve as a resource person to staff families. Provide direct contact to staff families and single members.
- (2) Liaison with CSO to attain administrative support, and other items/materials needed to carry out the program.
- (3) Participate in Area command "Sponsor" and "Welcome Aboard" orientation programs.
- (4) Serve as alternate trainer in the Area Command Ombudsman's absence.
- (5) Attend training as directed by COMNAVCRUITAREA.
- (6) Contribute to command newsletter on regular basis.
- (7) Act as an advisor to the Area Command Ombudsman.
- (8) Interface with the Area Commander on a monthly basis.
- (9) Maintain updated resource files.

g. NAVCRUITDIST Command Ombudsman

- (1) Act as a communication link between families and the command.

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(2) Train and support all Zone Ombudsmen in the District on a quarterly basis.

(3) Attend training as specified by the Area.

(4) Coordinate distribution of information to Zone Ombudsmen.

(5) Liaison with Executive Officer to attain administrative support, such as manuals, command roster, budget, equipment and other items/materials needed to execute the program. Identify/establish/acquire tools for program support, e.g., telephone access, answering machine, copier, postage costs.

(6) Assist with the Command's Sponsor Program. Makes personal phone contact with new spouses or single members upon receipt of enclosure (2) from NORU Ombudsman. When unable to call, the Command Ombudsman should send a personal letter. Follow up contact should be made to the spouse/single member within two weeks of their check-in date at the District.

(7) Coordinate an Ombudsman Program Welcome Aboard and Orientation which is separate but can be a portion of the command's sponsor program.

(8) Originate an Ombudsman newsletter for staff/zone ombudsmen and contribute regularly to a District publication.

(9) Work with command by providing input to all hands activities and training for spouses.

(10) Communicate with all Zone Ombudsmen and the Area Command Ombudsman at least once per month.

(11) Maintain liaison with the Command Master Chief (CMC). Include CMC in regularly scheduled training.

(12) Interface with the Commanding Officer on a monthly basis.

(13) Maintain updated resource files.

h. NAVCRUITDIST Staff/MEPS Ombudsmen

(1) Coordinate distribution of information.

(2) Liaison with Executive Officer to attain administrative support, such as manuals, command roster, budget, equipment and other items/materials needed to carry out the program.

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(3) Provide direct contact at a minimum monthly, in person or by telephone, to staff families and single members.

(4) Participate in command's Sponsor Program and Ombudsman welcome aboard/orientation programs.

(5) Attend District training and any other training as directed by the NAVCRUITDIST Commanding Officer to facilitate performance of duties.

(6) Originate a newsletter for staff families and assist with Command Ombudsman newsletter.

(7) Act as an alternate trainer for the NAVCRUITDIST Command Ombudsman.

(8) Maintain updated resource files.

i. NAVCRUITDIST Zone Ombudsmen

(1) Serve as an Ombudsman within a specific zone to which the active duty member is attached.

(2) Provide at a minimum monthly direct contact to Zone families and single members.

(3) Participate in the Sponsor Program. When referred by the District, personally contact new spouses/single members prior to their detaching previous duty station or as soon as notified of their orders to the zone or as information is made available by the command or Command Ombudsman.

(4) Attend training as directed by NAVCRUITDIST Commanding Officer to facilitate performance of duties.

(5) Originate zone and contribute regularly to District newsletter.

(6) Maintain updated resource files.

(7) Interface with the Command Ombudsman on a monthly basis.

(8) Interface with the Commanding Officer/Command Master Chief and the Command Ombudsman on personal and confidential matters.

(9) Interface with the Zone Supervisor on zone activities and newsletter input.

7. Selection. Criteria for selection of Ombudsmen is stated in reference (a), section C.

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8. Training. Commander, Navy Recruiting Command, Area Commanders and Recruiting District Commanding Officers are directly responsible for ensuring training is provided to their Ombudsmen per references (c) and (d). Commanders and Commanding Officers will ensure their Ombudsmen receive, as a minimum, the basic recruiting Ombudsman course offered under the guidance of the Area Command Ombudsman. Basic and Advanced Ombudsman Training, as provided by the nearest Family Service Center, should be used as an additional source of training when available.

a. Area and NORU Command Ombudsmen shall receive training as appropriate from the COMNAVCRUITCOM National Ombudsman. Individuals shall be scheduled for training prior to or immediately after assuming duties. Group training, combining Area and NORU Ombudsmen, shall be scheduled as required by COMNAVCRUITCOM. The National Ombudsman may assist Area Ombudsmen with training upon request. Training shall be coordinated by the Area Ombudsmen. In turn, NAVCRUITDIST Command Ombudsmen shall coordinate and conduct training for all Zone Ombudsmen. Areas/Districts shall program Ombudsman Invitational Travel Orders (ITO) requirements in their annual budgets.

b. Initial introduction to the Navy Recruiting Command Ombudsman Program for students shall be conducted at NORU by either the NORU or National Ombudsman when feasible.

9. Action. The following actions/policies are prescribed:

a. Commanders and commanding officers shall provide the following to Ombudsmen under their direct cognizance: a letter of appointment; a COMNAVCRUITCOM installation directory; command rosters (recall/social) with spouse name, address and telephone number; and a copy of references (a) and (b). The glossary of reference (f) defines common recruiting terms and is a helpful resource for new Ombudsmen. Make references (e) and (f) available for review by Ombudsmen.

b. Commands shall include in their Sponsor Program the name, address and phone number of the Command/Staff/Zone Ombudsman. When a sponsor is assigned, the administrative department shall forward a copy of the sponsorship letter to the appropriate Ombudsman. The Ombudsman shall not be required nor expected to substitute for a sponsor, but may assist in and monitor the implementation of the Sponsor Program.

c. Area Commanders shall maintain a central directory of all Ombudsmen in their Area, Districts and Zones. Updates will be sent to the COMNAVCRUITCOM National Program Manager semi-annually on 31 July and 31 January. These updates will be submitted via a floppy disc in address label format using WordPerfect 5.1 software.

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d. Commanders and Commanding Officers shall meet at least monthly with their Command and Staff Ombudsmen. Commanders and Commanding Officers should encourage Ombudsmen to meet with them at any time regarding any problems requiring immediate attention.

e. Term of Office. Ombudsmen shall be appointed for a period of one year subject to renewal. Trial periods will be six months for newly appointed Ombudsmen and three months for experienced Ombudsmen. At the conclusion of their term of office, all Ombudsmen shall turn in all manuals, references, instructions, supplies and other program material to their successor or to the Commander/Commanding Officer.

f. Resources and Assistance. Enclosure (3) contains information relative to Ombudsman duties.

10. Finances. Commanders and Commanding Officers shall meet annually with their Ombudsmen to discuss budget requirements no later than 31 May. Commanders and Commanding Officers will include Ombudsman program funding in their annual budget sufficient to cover training and program operating expenses. The Ombudsman should know the amount of funds available to operate the program effectively. Reimbursement for incidental expenses is authorized from appropriated and nonappropriated funds. Commanders and Commanding Officers are authorized to reimburse Ombudsmen for child care, mileage, parking, tolls and telephone calls as discussed in reference (a). Ombudsmen are also authorized clerical supplies and support. Subscriptions to Navy Times are authorized for Command Ombudsmen only. Delivery must be to the Command Headquarters and not to any other address.

11. Transportation and Travel. Ombudsmen may be authorized use of government vehicles as a driver or passenger. Section 10 U.S.C., Section 1588, provides for Ombudsmen and other volunteers of Family Support Programs to be covered for liability in case of accidents. Ombudsmen are recognized through official appointment letters issued by the Commander and Commanding Officer.

a. As drivers, Ombudsmen must have in their possession the official Ombudsman letter of appointment and a valid state driver's license. Ombudsmen are required to comply with the same NAVCRUITDIST instructions regarding the use of COMNAVCRUITCOM vehicles as other NAVCRUITDIST personnel.

b. As a driver or passenger, Invitational Travel Orders (ITOs) are not required for local travel within the commuting area of the assigned command or for trips performed outside of the commuting area when completed on the same day (no overnight involved). Ombudsmen are not entitled to per diem allowances but may be reimbursed for incidental expenses as defined in paragraph 10d.

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c. Ombudsmen may be authorized overnight temporary additional duty training trips outside the local commuting area. The temporary additional duty trip must be performed under ITOs. ITOs must be requested in accordance with procedures in reference (g).

d. When an ombudsman is traveling under ITOs, all per diem allowances and travel are authorized at rates not to exceed entitlements authorized under the Joint Federal Travel Regulations. While performing duties at the local command without overnight travel, incidental expenses entitled for reimbursement include:

(1) Child care - reimbursement is not to exceed the rate of the local Navy child development center. Reimbursement of child care expenses for Ombudsman does not change established child development center usage priorities.

(2) Mileage - if government vehicle is not used, the reimbursement for mileage will be at the government personal vehicle rate. Mileage must be documented in order to claim reimbursement.

(3) Parking and tolls - parking and tolls may be reimbursed. Receipts are required for amounts in excess of \$25.00, but are highly encouraged to be submitted when under this threshold.

(4) Telephone - toll calls not covered by command telephone credit cards may be reimbursed upon presentation of receipts.

12. Ombudsman Recognition. Commands should use every opportunity to recognize their Ombudsmen. Reference (a) establishes 14 September as Ombudsman Appreciation Day. Commands will conduct an appropriate ceremony/recognition on that day or the preceding Friday when the 14th is on a weekend.

13. Forms. NAVCRUIT 1754/1, Ombudsman Information and Referral, is available from the COMNAVCRUITCOM Program Manager.


D. A. GILES
Acting

Distribution:

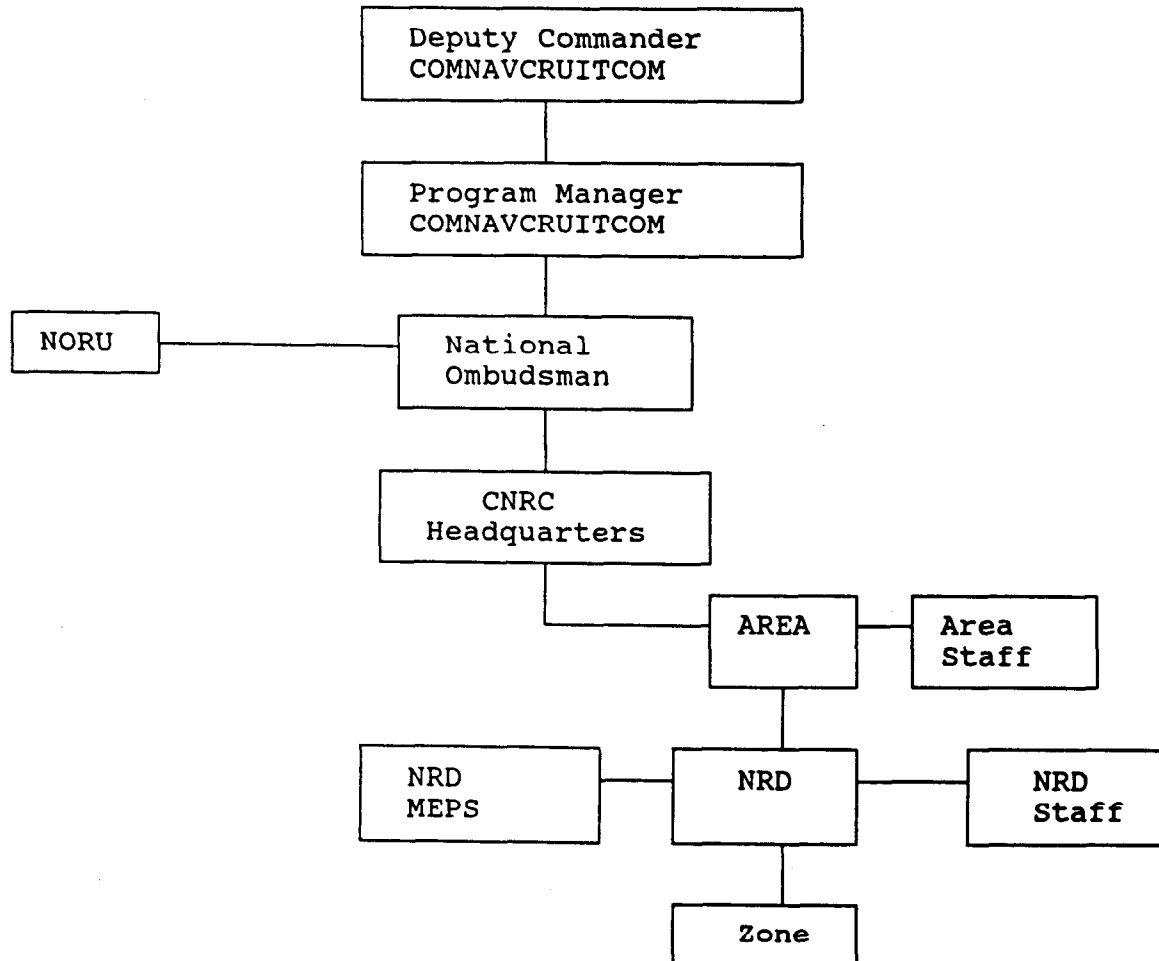
COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 5216.2Q (HDQ)

Lists I (A, C and D), IIA, IIIA (Case 2), B and C

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NAVY RECRUITING COMMAND OMBUDSMAN FLOW CHART



Enclosure (1)

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OMBUDSMAN INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

The Ombudsman program is designed to assist you and your family when transferring to a new duty station. Even though you may have filled out a sponsor information sheet, this information will be forwarded directly to the Ombudsman at your gaining command and will be used to assist you with your move. Please complete this form and return it to your instructor. Additionally, the NORU Ombudsman is available to provide assistance while attending school.

Member (Name/Rank): _____

Ultimate Assignment: Area _____

NRD _____ NRS _____

Est. Date Arrival at Duty Station : _____

Name of Spouse: _____

Spouse Current Mailing Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Single Parent: Yes _____ No _____

Number/Age of Children: _____

Are Children Traveling in route with you: Yes _____ No _____

Children's mailing address if different from yours or spouse's:

Special Needs: _____

_____.

Name of Assigned Sponsor: _____

NAVCRUIT 1754/1 (5-90)

Enclosure (2)

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RESOURCES AND ASSISTANCE LISTMILITARY SOURCES

- Navy Recruiter Magazine
- CHAMPUS Health Benefits Advisor (HBA)
- DEERS toll free number: 1-800-538-9552 (in Monterey, CA)
- Delta Dental Plan:
 - (916) 381-9368 - Claims west of Mississippi River
 - (313) 489-2240 - Claims east of Mississippi River
- Patient representatives at local military hospitals/clinics
- Local Family Service Center (FSC); Call FSC Washington, DC for nearest FSC (202) 433-NAVY
- Navy and Marine Relief Society (N/MRS); Call N/MRS Washington at (703) 696-4904 for number of nearest N/MRS
- Navy Wifeline Association (202) 433-2333
- Family Support Program - call (703) 694-1006 for nearest center
- Spouse Employment Assistance Program (SEAP) at the FSC
- Retired Activity Section (retired affairs/survivor benefits) - call the Retired Activity Section (PERS 662C) at 1-800-255-8950 for number of the nearest office (Northern Virginia call 614-3197)
- Counseling and Assistance Center (CAAC)
- Drug and Alcohol Program Advisor (DAPA)
- NFAA Cleveland (for allotment problems): (216) 522-5637
- Navy Finance Center (in case of service member death) Casualty Assistance Number is 1-800-537-0814
- Child Development Center
- Recreation services
- Special services/USO
- Housing Family home day care
- Security
- Chaplains (including willing local reservists)
- Applicable Army/Air Force/Marine Corps base numbers

COMMUNITY/CIVILIAN

- Local hotlines
- Shelters
- Department of Social Services
- Chamber of Commerce
- United Way - Local chapters
- Red Cross - Local chapters
- Home Business (new)
- Benefit and Eligibility Services
- Food stamps
- Children's Protective Services
- Adult Protective Services
- Consumer Advocate Agencies

Enclosure (3)

COMNAVCRUITCOMINST 1754.1B

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- Poison Control Hotline
- Housing Referral Services
- Department of Recreation
- School Districts
- Special Programs
- Juvenile Courts
- Domestic Courts
- Child Care Facilities
- State and Local Visitors Centers
- AT&T Phone Books
- Churches
- Parks, Art and Recreation Resources
- Other Information & Referral Networks

Enclosure (3)

2

Reserve Commands

There are a number of unique aspects of a reserve command for ombudsmen:

- The ombudsman may work for a Naval Reserve Activity commanding officer (such as at a Naval Reserve Center) and support more than one reserve unit, each having a separate and unique mission, training schedule, and unit composition.
- Reserve command members will be drawn from many different communities, perhaps even different states. This greatly complicates the ombudsman's task of identifying resources for referrals.
- There are two separation events for reservists and their families:
 - The annual two weeks of training.
 - The separation caused by a potential mobilization or callup.
- A great deal of a reserve ombudsman's effort must be in preparation for mobilization (such as for Desert Shield/Desert Storm), when the services of an ombudsman become absolutely crucial. The simplistic problems arising from annual two-week training can be misleading and give little indication of the enormity and complexity of issues that develop from a mobilization.
- While most unit members are Navy veterans, some will have joined just out of boot camp or will be direct accessions, and their overall familiarity with the Navy will be low. These service members and their families may not have had prior separation experience. Their reaction to the two-week annual training will probably be minor, but their reaction to separation due to mobilization can be expected to be more severe than that of the veterans.
- Most units perform their two-week training as a group, and the ombudsman workload will likely be highest during this period; however, many individuals perform their two weeks alone and may also require attention.

In order to function effectively in this type of situation, here are some suggestions:

- Develop a network of resources that cover the entire area that your reserve members are drawn from, even if this covers several States. Contact State agencies, Chambers of Commerce, the United Way, and chapters of national organizations to identify the resources that are available within their hometowns.
- The Alliance of Information and Referrals Systems, Inc. (AIRS) publishes a directory of information and referral services in the United States and Canada. Your local Navy Family Service Center should have a copy of this directory for your reference in case you need to obtain referral information for distant locations. Reserve/recruit commands may wish to obtain a copy of this directory for local support in the absence of a Navy Family Service Center.

- Identify potential assistants in the event of mobilization of one of more of your units.
- In the event of a national mobilization, a large number of civilian companies and organizations will likely offer services and support to affected military families. Assign someone to keep track of these offered benefits and ensure your families are aware of them. Just as important, after the mobilization is over, ensure appropriate appreciation is given to the companies and organizations by your commanding officer.
- Your commanding officer has an unclassified mobilization plan that will be used in the event of mobilization. Read it.
- Annually your unit(s) will conduct a mobilization exercise that will familiarize them with its workings. Try to attend.
- Familiarize yourself with the pay system, especially changes that occur during two-week trainings, and those that take place during a mobilization (they are different). Examples include responsibility for pay records, time allotted for record transfer to active status, PSD assignments. Also, the benefits that are available to the Reserve members and families will be of keen interest. Most requests for assistance fall into this area.
- Try to line up resources for stress management and depression problems in the event of mobilization. During past mobilizations these services have been provided free of charge.
- Your newsletter is your primary outreach tool. Use it to keep the unit families informed and connected. Include information on the most-asked questions as well as information about where the upcoming annual training will be, and the ship, squadron, station, etc., to which they may be attached.

The importance of an accurate recall bill is vital in the event of mobilization or recall. The unit is responsible for providing you with a current, updated recall bill. If you support more than one unit it may be easier to obtain a recall bill from the supporting Naval Reserve Activity commanding officer.

If a unit is mobilized or recalled, your job description becomes the same as that of a deploying command. You cannot wait until the crisis develops. You should have a plan of action and support developed and agreed upon by your commanding officer, and kept on file and activated when needed.

Funding and administrative support will be provided by the Naval Reserve Activity to which your units are assigned.

NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTER SECTION

NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTER SECTION

The Navy Family Service Center stands in a special relationship to the ombudsman program. This uniqueness is recognized in the current OPNAVINST 1750.1D, which describes the two as being "complementary programs." The Navy Family Service Centers are an invaluable resource for ombudsmen, who in turn provide much assistance to the centers. In partnership, the ombudsmen and Navy Family Service Centers are the major vehicles through which the Navy demonstrates its concern and support for Navy families and their quality of life.

The purpose of this section of the ombudsman manual is to describe how this complementary relationship works by listing some of the ways that the program and the centers can be mutually supportive.

The potential for a mutually beneficial collaboration between ombudsmen and the Navy Family Service Center is great. As written in OPNAVINST 1750.1D, the Navy Family Service Center is tasked as a resource to offer support to ombudsmen in areas such as, but not limited to: coordination of ombudsman training, establishment of ombudsman support groups, provision of resources and information when individual family problems are presented to the ombudsmen, and maintenance of area ombudsman rosters. The synergy created by a close, cooperative working relationship between an ombudsman and Navy Family Service Center staff both enhances their respective effectiveness and also makes the discharge of their respective responsibilities easier.

The ombudsman can serve as a strong and informed link between the Navy Family Service Center and the Navy families in the local commands. Conversely, the ombudsman can benefit from the guidance, assistance, and interaction with the center's professional staff. This contact can serve as a source of program creativity, enthusiasm, and support for the ombudsman. One way to facilitate this optimal collaboration is to invite the ombudsman assembly chair/coordinator to function as a "non-paid" Navy Family Service Center staff member with office, phone, and administrative support supplied by the center. This is not to be expanded into a full-time job, with subsequent increased babysitting expenses for the sponsoring command. The assembly chairman and ombudsman program coordinator may assist each other. This continuous contact between the ombudsman assembly chairman and the Navy Family Service Center staff contributes to mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation.

THE NAVY FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Navy Family Support Program's mission is to enhance operational readiness, productivity, and retention through the improvement of quality of life for Navy members and their families. It is designed to assist Navy families and single service members with a variety of personal support services. Established in 1979 following the Norfolk Family Awareness Conference, the program now has Navy Family Service Centers in operation throughout the world. These centers provide access to services for over 95% of the active-duty people. Additional Navy Family Service Centers are planned for the future. The Navy Family Service Centers operated by the Marine Corps, as well as the other services' family support centers, are available to Navy families. The Navy Family Service Center system represents the Navy's commitment to the well-being of the Navy family. The Navy Family Support Program is a division within the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Washington, DC. A sample article introducing the Navy Family Service Center is found at the end of this section for use in your newsletter.

NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTER SUPPORT FOR OMBUDSMEN

There are a variety of services that a Navy Family Service Center can provide that will contribute to the effectiveness of the program and the personal well-being of the ombudsmen. These include:

- Coordinate standardized ombudsman training (Basic Training, Advanced Training and ongoing training) for both active-duty and reserve commands.
- Arrange and provide (from Navy Family Service Center staff and other sources) speakers and trainers for required trainings. For specific guidance on appropriate approved trainers, contact the Pers-662 Ombudsman Program Manager for recommendations.
- Plan logistics and handle administration for the training.
- Promote and coordinate ongoing ombudsman training.
- Provide speakers on a variety of topics for assembly meetings.

TRAINING

- A member of the Navy Family Service Center staff is appointed as the Ombudsman Program Coordinator.
- In addition to the Ombudsman Program Coordinator, other Navy Family Service Center staff and chaplains can serve as consultants for ombudsmen to discuss interventions and approaches with families, including remote sites.

SUPPORT

The Navy Family Service Centers shall:

- Maintain a current roster of local ombudsmen, including reserve ombudsmen where appropriate, and encourage each ombudsman to forward a copy of his/her appointment letter to the Navy Wifeline Association to facilitate maintenance of the worldwide roster.
- Provide space for assembly meetings, if available.
- Organize meetings and may provide facilitators for ombudsman support groups.
- Provide personal support and counseling for ombudsmen.
- Provide office space, supplies, and assistance with newsletter preparation for ombudsman assembly chairs/coordinators.
- Provide assistance to local ombudsmen, including Naval Reserve ombudsmen, consistent with other priorities within the Navy Family Service Center.
- Assist commands in the effective use of their ombudsman. When areas of concern become apparent within the ombudsman program, the FSC ombudsman program coordinator and director may make an appointment with the appropriate command to discuss the areas of concern and supply copies of resource materials from the BUPERS Ombudsman Program Manager. The commanding officer, now fully informed, will then make the decisions required to address these concerns.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

- Navy Family Service Centers provide ombudsmen with information and forms for Navy and community resources, including updates and changes.
- Navy Family Service Centers are a source of many services for Navy families and thus are a major referral and followup resource for ombudsmen.
- Navy Family Service Centers can refer command families to their ombudsmen and provide information to new arrivals on the ombudsman program services.

OMBUDSMEN ASSISTANCE TO NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTERS

Conversely, there are things that ombudsmen can do to assist the Navy Family Service Centers to better serve command families.

- Promote a positive image of the Navy Family Service Center among the families and command.

- Provide outreach and referral among the command family members to the Navy Family Service Center, especially among spouses new to the Navy and those who are reluctant to seek assistance.
- Using their newsletters and phone trees, ombudsmen can disseminate information concerning the Navy Family Service Center and its programs as well as updates on other Navy services among the families, especially those who might not visit the Navy Family Service Center, those living outside the Navy housing area, in overseas locations, and elsewhere where families live great distances from the base.
- Ombudsmen provide a screening function with families, often handling many of the minor problems directly (especially the information requests), thus freeing Navy Family Service Center staff time and resources for more serious issues.
- Ombudsmen provide feedback on Navy Family Service Center programs and services as well as how the center is perceived in general by families.
- Ombudsmen can identify needs which may serve as the basis for new services developed by the Navy Family Service Center.
- Ombudsmen can be a source of information on Navy life for new Navy Family Service Center staff unfamiliar with the Navy and the Navy family.
- Ombudsmen can be a source of information when a Navy activity wants to survey Navy spouses.

GUIDELINES FOR OMBUDSMEN AND NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTERS WORKING TOGETHER

Visit the Navy Family Service Center

One of the first actions after your appointment should be to schedule an orientation tour to visit the Navy Family Service Center and meet the staff. This personal contact will allow you to familiarize yourself with the center's services and staff, answer any questions you might have, and put faces with names, which makes referral easier and more certain. Developing personal working relationships with the Navy Family Service Center staff is one of the most useful things you can do.

Establish a Working Relationship With the Navy Family Service Center Ombudsman Program Coordinator

Usually each Navy Family Service Center has one staff person, trained and knowledgeable about ombudsman policies, programs, and procedures, designated as the point of contact for ombudsmen and ombudsman program support. Get to know this person.

FOR THE OMBUDSMAN

Establish a Working Relationship With the Information & Referral (I&R) Coordinator

The Information & Referral Coordinator, in particular, is someone you should get to know well. If there is not an updating procedure, then make it a practice to check in regularly to learn if there are any changes in programs that you should be aware of and incorporate into your resource files.

Familiarize Yourself With the Basic Procedures at Your Base

There are certain procedures (e.g., getting an ID card, checking on late allotments, etc.) that you should learn to allow you to handle any questions directly without having to refer to the Navy Family Service Center.

***FOR THE NAVY
FAMILY SERVICE
CENTER***

Include Ombudsman Assembly Chairman in Navy Family Service Center Staff Meetings

Many Navy Family Service Centers have found it useful to include the assembly chair/coordinator in their regular staff meeting. This contributes to good communication flow and understanding among the two systems and promotes maximum collaboration.

Include the Ombudsman Program in New Navy Family Service Center Staff Orientation

A thorough briefing of new Navy Family Service Center staff on the ombudsman program, including a meeting with the assembly chair/ coordinator and/or several command ombudsmen, would quickly familiarize the staff with the program and the potential for mutually beneficial services that exist.

Include New Ombudsmen in Navy Family Service Center Orientations

Invite the commanding officers, executive officers, and command master chiefs and their spouses to attend Family Service Center orientation with the ombudsman.

CORE FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

The Navy Family Service Center core program areas of service are:

- ***Command and Community Consultation***

Navy Family Service Centers provide comprehensive information and referral services concerning programs, services, volunteer opportunities, and resources available in both the military and civilian communities for single and married Navy members and their families. Navy Family Service Centers work through and in support of the assigned shore activity's chain of command to provide for a reasonable quality of life for Navy personnel and their families.

- ***Information and Referral***

The Navy Family Service Center staff is well-versed on both military and civilian resources and has a wealth of information gathered from a variety of sources. Staff members determine the appropriate referrals given the family situation. They maintain close liaison with community and base services such as housing referral, recreation services, educational offices, health care, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, the Navy Wifeline Association, the American Red Cross, service credit unions, the USO, and Armed Forces YMCA.

- ***Counseling***

The Navy Family Service Center staff provides counseling in life-coping situations helping people to deal with stressful situations. The Navy Family Service Center is also the starting point for referral for more serious problems. Navy Family Service Center counselors can make referrals to other Navy or civilian agencies or counselors.

- ***Family Education***

Navy Family Service Centers provide or sponsor briefings, presentations, and workshops. Stress management, financial management, family enrichment, couples communication, and parenting education are some of the most popular programs.

- ***Deployment Support***

Navy Family Service Centers provide assistance to Navy personnel and their families in coping with the difficulties inherent in deployment of the service member. Navy Family Service Centers provide or sponsor briefings, presentations, and workshops on pre-deployment, deployment, and homecoming/return/reunion and other programs to assist Navy personnel and their families.

- ***Spouse Employment Assistance Program (SEAP)***

The mobile lifestyle can restrict a Navy spouse's opportunities for employment and career advancement. Finding satisfactory employment and achieving career goals in the midst of frequent relocations to economically and geographically diverse duty stations requires job-search skills and career planning for his/her mobile lifestyle. The Navy spouse who lacks these resources runs the risk of underemployment, static earnings, and personal dissatisfaction. SEAP addresses the significant problems in spouse employment associated with the Navy's mobile lifestyle. Each Navy Family Service Center has a dedicated program to address the employment needs of military spouses.

- ***Personal Financial Management Education and Counseling (PFM)***

Navy Family Service Centers provide training and counseling in personal financial responsibility and accountability by providing basic principles and practices of sound money management, counseling tools, and referral services.

- ***Navy Family Ombudsman Program Support***

Navy Family Service Centers support command ombudsmen by maintaining the roster of area ombudsmen and providing space, as available, within the Navy Family Service Center for use by the ombudsmen. They offer support to ombudsmen in such ways as coordinating ombudsman training, establishing ombudsman support groups, and assisting commands in effective use and recognition of ombudsmen.

- ***Volunteer Program***

Navy Family Service Centers serve as the volunteer clearinghouse for Navy personnel and their families who may wish to perform volunteer work in either the military or civilian communities. Use of volunteers to complement and supplement Navy Family Service Center programs is highly encouraged.

- ***Cultural Adjustment/Indoctrination Assistance***

Navy Family Service Centers provide assistance to area commands in conducting indoctrination to service members and their families. Navy Family Service Centers also conduct intercultural relationship training to service members and their families upon arrival at a new duty station.

- ***Relocation Assistance Program (RAP)***

Navy Family Service Centers provide information and referral to military members relocating into or out of their area. Support services may include: pre-move planning assistance, worldwide Welcome Aboard packages and videos, newcomers and pre-move seminars, lending lockers of temporary loan household items, and automated computer programs such as SITES, with base and community information on all military installations worldwide.

- ***Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP)***

The Navy's TAMP is designed to help Navy members and their families move on to civilian professions or retirement as smoothly as possible. TAMP services are free and are offered at Navy Family Service Centers worldwide. The services include: employment assistance such as seminars, computerized job referrals, resume services, automated bulletin boards with job openings, job fairs, and transition workshops. Overseas relocation assistance is also provided by Navy Family Service Centers on quality of life issues, spouse employment, job search, and education.

- ***Family Advocacy Program (FAP)***

The Family Advocacy Program is designed to address prevention, evaluation, identification, intervention, treatment, and followup on child abuse/neglect and spouse abuse. The program consists of coordinated efforts designed to prevent and intervene in cases of family distress and to promote healthy family life. Detailed information about the Family Advocacy Program is provided in ombudsman training.

- ***Crisis Response Support***

Navy Family Service Centers provide strong support during crisis. They provide such services as developing crisis response plans of action; inventorying human, physical and fiscal resources; developing staffing augmentation plans; increasing community liaison; and developing partnerships with human service providers, school systems, and organizations. They also act as consultants on family matters, and military and community resources and human services, and often have personnel available to support affected commands.

- ***Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)***

Governed by OPNAVINST 1754.2A, Navy Family Service Centers provide information on medical, educational, community support, and personal services to families with special needs.

- ***Retired Activities Officers (RAOs)***

These officers liaison with the retired community to keep retirees informed of changing programs and policies. Those Navy Family Service Centers with RAOs offer assistance in such areas as retired activities programs, Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), and Retired Casualty Assistance Program (RCAP). RAOs are a means of reporting issues of concern to retirees to SECNAV's Advisory Committee on Retired Personnel. Many RAOs coordinate annual seminars for the retired community in their area.

- ***Additional Services***

In addition to these services offered throughout the Navy Family Service center system, each center has developed a number of services and programs geared to the local needs in their Navy community. It is important that you check with your local Navy Family Service Center to determine the full range of services that are available to your command.

OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

**SAMPLE
NEWSLETTER
ARTICLE TO
INTRODUCE
THE NAVY
FAMILY SERVICE
CENTER**

***Navy Family Service Center
Providing Support to Families and Single Service Members***

Navy and Marine Corps Navy Family Service Centers (Navy Family Service Centers) are designed to help Navy and Marine families and single service members with a variety of personal support services.

What can the Navy Family Service Center do for you? Navy Family Service Centers address practically every area of Navy and Marine Corps family life. They provide a comprehensive information and referral service on a wide range of family-related programs and services, including resources which are available in both the military and local civilian community. Navy Family Service Center staff members and volunteers work to coordinate all people-oriented support and assistance programs.

Each Navy Family Service Center provides assistance and support to existing command-sponsored efforts such as command Sponsor Programs, command ombudsmen, and pre-deployment briefings. Navy Family Service Centers have information to help ease the relocation process and they often offer programs on subjects of interest to military families, such as budget-stretching, finding a new job after a family move, parenting classes, helping families improve their communications skills, and many others.

When you come in with a request or a question, the Navy Family Service Center can readily refer you to the appropriate military or civilian resource.

They will offer you hospitality kits, and tell you about recreational facilities, how to get your passport if you're going overseas, or all about child care centers, Navy Lodges and other special services. They are ready to help you get legal aid, voting registration information, or help with your "special needs" child. They have a detailed reference library and a computer program (SITES) that provides detailed information about continental and overseas duty stations. Navy Family Service Centers also can help you with personal or family problems.

Each Navy Family Service Center offers a wide range of personal and family enrichment programs to interested people. Navy Family Service Centers are natural, helpful, everyday resources which can be of real benefit to "everyday" people who have "everyday" needs as well as an occasional "crisis."

Your local Navy Family Service Center is staffed with a combination of military and civilian personnel, who will do their best to come up with just about any kind of information or help you'll need—and if they don't have it at their fingertips, they know where to find it.

APPENDIX

PRIVACY ACT ISSUANCES 1987 COMPILATION

AUTHORITY

This compilation of Privacy Act Issuances is published by the Office of the Federal Register in compliance with the requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. 552a).

TITLE AND FORM OF CITATION

The official title of this publication is "Privacy Act Issuances, 1987 Compilation.
To cite a system of records or rule in this publication, the form of citation would be:

Privacy Act Issuances, 1987 Comp.,
Volume III, p. 546 and 547.
N01070-3

System name:

Navy Personnel Records System.

Categories of individuals covered by the system:

All Navy military personnel: Officers, enlisted, active, inactive, reserve, fleet reserve, retired, midshipmen, officer candidates, and Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps personnel.

Routine uses of records maintained in the system, including categories of users and the purposes of such uses:

To duly appointed Family Ombudsmen in the performance of their duties related to the assistance of the members and their families.

Retrievability:

Manual records may be retrieved by name, social security account number, enlisted service number, or officer file number.

SAMPLE OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTION

(New Instruction Title and Number)

Subj: AMPHIBIOUS OMBUDSMAN ASSEMBLY

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 1750.1
(b) COMNAVSURFPACINST 5400.1G
(c) NAVY FAMILY OMBUDSMAN MANUAL, NAVPERS # 15571

1. Purpose. To promulgate policy for the Amphibious Ombudsman Assembly.

2. Cancellation. (area) Ombudsman Assembly By-Laws.

3. Discussion. The Navy Ombudsman Program was created in 1970 to provide a direct link between commands and families. References (a) and (b) provide clear guidelines for the designation of Ombudsmen and their functions. With the active support of the command, the Command Family Ombudsman Program can produce significant benefits.

An important element in the Navys' Ombudsman Program is the local Assembly. Assemblies perform important communications and support functions for the local command Ombudsmen. Reference (c) defines the roles and responsibilities of the Command, the Ombudsman and the Assembly.

4. Action. All COMPHIBGRU THREE, COMPHIBRON SEVEN, AND COMPHIBRON NINE Units and their appointed Ombudsmen will participate in the Amphibious Ombudsman Assembly as outlined below:

a. Mission. To provide a forum for the exchange of ideas between representative Ombudsmen of the Amphibious community; to facilitate communication with the Amphibious Commanders on suggestions and problems which are beyond the purview of individual commands; and to implement programs and plans of action that enhance the morale and welfare of the Amphibious community.

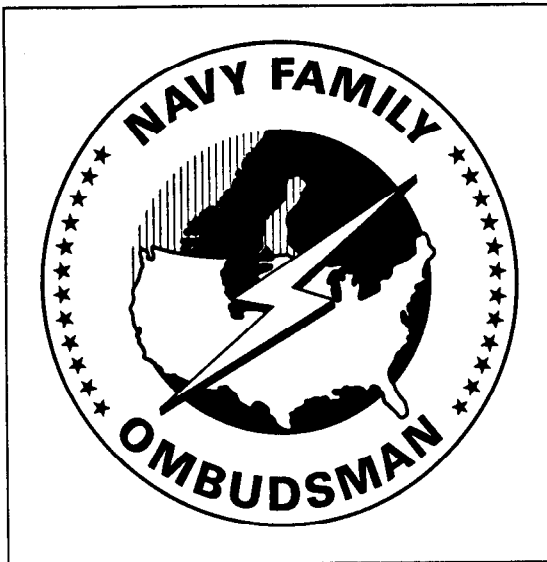
b. Membership. All assigned Ombudsmen and Command Representatives from COMPHIBGRU THREE, COMPHIBRON SEVEN, and COMPHIBRON NINE Units.

c. Meetings. Meetings will be held twice per quarter as a Assembly and once per quarter in conjunction with the CNSP Meeting. Amphibious Assembly meetings will be held on the second Tuesday and will rotate between morning meetings at the USO and evening meetings at the Club Coronado.

d. Advisory Board. The Amphibious Ombudsman Assembly will have an Advisory Board consisting of an Ombudsman coordinator, a Group/Squadron Commander's wife, COMPHIBRON NINE administration Readiness Officer, COMPHIBRON SEVEN Chaplain, and a COMPHIBGRU THREE Staff Representative. The Ombudsman Coordinator will be appointed by COMPHIBGRU THREE and will meet monthly prior to the Assembly meeting, or as required, and will set the agenda for the Assembly meetings, disseminate information, address current issues, provide on-going training, and enhance networking for the Amphibious Community. This committee may, at its discretion, appoint activity chairpersons to be specialists in the areas of Commissary/Navy Exchange, Housing, Medical/Dental, Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society, etc.

OMBUDSMAN CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

OMBUDSMAN



Presented to

For your outstanding service
in support of our Navy
families and this Command
for the period of

CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

Ombudsman Certificates of Appreciation are available for command use.
Commands may print their own, using this as a sample, or may order them from:

The Navy Wifeline Association
901 M. St, SE, Bldg 172
Washington Navy Yard
Washington, DC., 20374-5067
(202) 433-2333/ DSN 288-2333

OMBUDSMAN FAMILY INFORMATION FORM

DATE _____

SPONSORS NAME: _____ RATE/RANK _____

SPONSORS SOCIAL SECURITY NO (IF NECESSARY) _____

COMMAND ASSIGNED (INCL. DEPT/DIVISION) _____

SPOUSES' NAME: _____

HOME TELEPHONE: _____ WORK TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS: _____

CHILDREN:
NAMES

BIRTHDATES

PRIMARY NEXT OF KIN:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS _____

SECONDARY NEXT OF KIN:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS _____

OMBUDSMAN TELEPHONE LOG

[illegible]

OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET

DATE OF INITIAL REQUEST _____

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SPONSORS NAME: _____ RATE/RANK _____

SPONSORS SOCIAL SECURITY NO (IF NECESSARY) _____

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED:

NOTES/COMMENTS/ASSISTANCE RENDERED:

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED/COMPLETED:

NOTE: Date all entries made on the same assistance sheet

OMBUDSMAN ASSISTANCE WORKSHEET

DATE OF INITIAL REQUEST _____

SPONSOR'S NAME _____ RANK/RATE _____

SSN: _____

FAMILY MEMBER'S NAME _____ PHONE # _____

ADDRESS _____

NATURE OF REQUESTED ASSISTANCE:

☐ NO MAIL SINCE _____

☐ HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY MONEY SINCE _____

☐ NAVY/MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY HELP NEEDED? ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF SO, TO WHOM REFERRED _____

☐ IF ALLOTMENT CHECK PROBLEM, WAS NFC NOTIFIED? HOW, WHEN?

☐ **SICKNESS IN FAMILY**
NAME _____ RELATIONSHIP _____

ILLNESS _____

WANTS SPONSOR NOTIFIED: ☐ YES ☐ NO
IF YES, HOW NOTIFIED AND WHEN? _____

☐ **DEATH IN FAMILY**
NAME _____ RELATIONSHIP _____

WHEN _____ HOW _____

HAS RED CROSS BEEN NOTIFIED TO MAKE OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION AND NOTIFICATION
TO SPONSORS UNIT? ☐ YES ☐ NO WHEN? _____

IS SPONSOR'S PRESENCE REQUIRED/REQUESTED? ☐ YES ☐ NO

METHOD OF NOTIFICATION: _____

☐ OTHER: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

FOLLOW UP REQUIRED? ☐ YES ☐ NO

QUICK REFERENCE - FAMILY SUPPORT RESOURCES

COMMANDING OFFICER OFFICE.....
HOME.....
COMMAND MASTER CHIEF OFFICE.....
HOME.....
COMMAND DUTY OFFICER.....

RESOURCES

AMBULANCE (ON-BASE).....
(OFF-BASE).....
BEQ/BOQ.....
CHAPLAIN.....
CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER.....
FAMILY HOME CARE PROVIDERS.....
COMMISSARY.....
COUNSELING AND ASSISTANCE CENTER.....
DEPT. OF FAMILY/CHILD SERVICES.....
EMERGENCY MEDICAL.....
NAVY FAMILY SERVICE CENTER.....
COUNSELING.....
FAMILY ADVOCACY REPRESENTATIVE.....
INFORMATION AND REFERRAL.....
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM COORDINATOR.....
SEAP.....
TAMP.....
FIRE.....
FOOD STAMPS.....
HEALTH BENEFITS ADVISOR.....
HOSPICE.....
HOUSING.....
HUMANE SOCIETY.....
IDENTIFICATION CARDS.....
LEGAL SERVICES.....
LIBRARY.....
MEDICAL CLINIC (URGENT CARE).....
NAVY EXCHANGE.....
NAVY FEDERAL CREDIT UNION.....
NAVY LODGE.....
NAVY/MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY.....
NAVAL INVESTIGATIVE SERVICE.....
PEDIATRICS.....
PERSONAL PROPERTY.....
PERSONAL SUPPORT DETACHMENT (PSD).....
POISON CONTROL HOTLINE.....
POLICE.....
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE.....
RECREATION (MWR).....
RED CROSS.....
SCHOOL DISTRICTS.....
SECURITY.....
OTHER OMBUDSMEN:

GLOSSARY

Advanced Ombudsman Training: See Ombudsman Training.

Allotment: A fixed amount of money a service member designates to go to a particular place, person, account, or bill.

AMCROSS/ARC: American Red Cross. A nonprofit organization dedicated to "improving the quality of human life, to enhance self-reliance and concern for others and to cope with national emergencies." ARC services to the Navy include: 1) emergency communication, 2) assistance in emergency leave verification, 3) emergency financial assistance, 4) disaster preparedness, 5) health and safety training, and 6) volunteer services at Navy hospitals.

Appointment, Letter of: An official letter of appointment, signed by the commanding officer, designating a person (by name) as the command ombudsman.

Appointment, Term of: There is no established term of office for an ombudsman. A short-term appointment (e.g., one year subject to renewal) is recommended. The ombudsman term of office automatically expires: upon PCS transfer of the command member, upon retirement or discharge of the command member, and at change of command.

Appropriated Funds: Funds authorized by Congress for use by various Government departments by appropriation. They are made for specific purposes and cannot be expended for any other purpose than the one stipulated. These are often thought of as "taxpayer dollars."

Assembly Chair: The person appointed by the sponsoring command to lead the ombudsman assembly. This person should be a spouse of an active-duty service member currently serving a command within the ombudsman council. The chair does not have to be an active ombudsman, but should have appropriate experience for the position.

Basic Ombudsman Training: See Ombudsman Training.

Battle Group: See Task Force.

Bluejacket: Navy enlisted man below the rank of CPO.

BUPERS: Bureau of Naval Personnel. The organization that provides all personnel policy and guidance for Navy personnel and their families.

BZ: Bravo Zulu. Navy term for "well done!"

CACO: Casualty Assistance Calls Officer. An officer (active-duty service member) assigned by the command to help a family in the event of death or serious injury to a service member.

Careline: A term within the ombudsman program that describes a dedicated phone line/answering machine that plays a recorded informational message (SITREP) from the command. Carelines are usually accessible 24 hours a day to update families on command information.

Chain of Command: The organization within a command or unit which officially lists "who works for whom."

CHAMPUS: Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services. A program for family members which supplements the medical benefits offered at military treatment facilities.

Change of Command: A traditional Naval ceremony in which the command is officially passed from one commanding officer to a duly ordered successor. Historically, this tradition ensured that only the duly authorized officer held command and that all aboard were aware of who indeed was in command.

Chit: A voucher or request.

CHNAVPERS/CNP: Chief of Naval Personnel. Senior officer within the Bureau of Naval Personnel.

Classified Information: Information or material that cannot be divulged to others without express permission and/or consent of competent authority. Any ombudsman concerns over classified matters should be addressed directly to their chain of command.

CNO: Chief of Naval Operations. Senior ranking officer within the U.S. Navy, who serves as the principal naval advisor and executive to the Secretary of the Navy on the activities of the Navy. Also a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

CO: Commanding Officer. Regardless of rank, the officer first in command of a Navy unit.

Command Family Ombudsman Program: The title of ombudsman program as it relates to a local command. The command family ombudsman is appointed by, reports to, and represents the commanding officer of a Naval command.

Command Family Support Team: For purposes of the ombudsman program, defined as the commanding officer, executive officer, command master chief, chaplain, ombudsman, and others as appointed or assigned by the commanding officer. The CFST often includes the family support group leader, and the CO, XO, and CMC spouses as appropriate.

Command Roster: This is the official roster of all command personnel given to the ombudsman, containing pertinent information needed for the performance of official ombudsman duties. The Privacy Act Issuances, 1987 Compilation, Volume III, pp 546 and 547, specifically designate release of roster information to "duly appointed family ombudsman in the performance of duties related to the assistance of members and their families." Information on the command roster given to the ombudsman is at the discretion of the commanding officer.

Commodore: An honorary title given to an officer commanding a squadron or flotilla of destroyers, submarines, amphibious ships, or other vessels.

Confidentiality: For purposes of the ombudsman program, confidential information is defined by the commanding officer as sensitive information about a service member or family member that is kept within the system for official use only and is only relayed to others only on a "need-to-know" basis.

CONUS: The Continental United States (48 States and the District of Columbia).

DEERS: Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System. The DEERS data base lists everyone (active duty, retired, and dependents) eligible for entitlements.

DSN: Defense Switched Network. A Department of Defense internal telephone system, formerly Automated Voice Network (AUTOVON).

Family Support Group: This is an all-encompassing term that describes a wide range of support groups within the Navy that support families of service members assigned to a particular command. Examples include formally organized groups, informal organizations, officer spouse clubs, chief spouse clubs, enlisted spouse clubs, and Navy Wives Clubs of America, Inc. Information on family support groups is available from the Navy Wifeline Association.

FSC Ombudsman Program Coordinator: A Family Service Center staff person officially assigned responsibilities for ombudsman programs at a particular location. This position is usually staffed only at large FSCs, or at FSCs that serve highly deployable commands.

Holiday Routine: A relaxed workday routine sometimes followed aboard ships at sea on Sundays and holidays.

I Division: "I" stands for indoctrination; division is a subdivision of the main crew. I Division is thus a division of newly reporting personnel to a command grouped together for a period of indoc and orientation. Ombudsmen are sometimes asked to speak at I Division to new personnel about ombudsman roles and activities.

IMARSAT: International Maritime Satellite Network. A telephone patch via satellite to deployed units. (No one, including ombudsmen, has the authority to make an incoming IMARSAT call without the express consent, approval, or previous instruction from the command.)

ISIC: Immediate Superior in the Chain of Command. All Naval commands are responsible to a higher authority. In ombudsman terms, the ISIC is the command to which an ombudsman's commanding officer reports. In this role, the ISIC is often the point of contact for the ombudsman when his/her command is deployed.

Key Volunteers: Marine Corps equivalent to a Navy ombudsman. A spouse of a member of a Marine command who is appointed by the commanding officer to serve as official liaison between the command and family members.

Leave: Paid vacation for active duty earned at the rate of 2.5 days per month.

LES: Leave and Earning Statement. A monthly report of pay and allowances received for active military duty.

Liberty: Authorized absence of an individual from place of duty, not chargeable as leave. No period of liberty shall exceed a total of 96 hours, weekends inclusive.

Line Officer: Officer who may succeed to operational command, as opposed to staff corps officer, who normally exercises authority only in a specialty (e.g., supply centers, hospitals, etc.).

MTT: Mobile Training Team. The Ombudsman Mobile Training Team consists of persons trained and appointed by Pers-66 for the purpose of training Navy commands, FSC program managers, ombudsman assemblies, and ombudsmen on the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

"Navy Family": For purposes of the ombudsman program only, the Navy family is defined as all active-duty Navy members and their families. This can include single and married service members, their immediate family members, the service members' parents, siblings, and others. Definition of the Navy family at each command is always at the discretion of the local commanding officer.

Navy Family Ombudsman Program: The official title of the ombudsman program within the U.S. Navy.

NMCRS/NAVMCREL: Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society. A private, nonprofit organization, funded by donations, providing emergency assistance to sea service families in need. Services include emergency transportation, emergency financial assistance, budgeting education, student loans and scholarships, and visiting nurse programs. NMCRS offices are located at most Navy installations worldwide and can be contacted directly for more information.

Non-Appropriated Funds: Funds derived from sources other than appropriated funds, such as sales and profits from MWR programs and activities, family support groups, etc. These funds cannot be directed to individuals but may be used for the betterment of the command according to policies set forth by the Secretary of the Navy.

NWA: Navy Wifeline Association. An informational and educational organization established in 1965 by and for Navy spouses. The association's goal is to help sea service families cope with problems unique to military life. All spouses, male and female, of Navy and Marine Corps service members are automatically members of NWA with no membership fee or registration requirement. For more information call NWA: (202) 433-2333.

OCONUS: Outside the Continental United States.

OIC: Officer in Charge. Regardless of rank, the officer who is the leader of a Navy detachment.

Ombudsman: A spouse of an active-duty member of a command who has been officially appointed by the commanding officer to serve as the liaison between the command and command families, and to provide information and referral sources as needed.

Ombudsman Advisory Board: Appointed by the sponsoring command, the assembly advisory board may include an assembly chair, the spouse of a senior military member, a chaplain, a command master chief, ombudsman representation, an action officer from the sponsor's staff, and other appropriate persons appointed by the sponsor.

Ombudsman Assembly: Base commanders, commanding officers, and/or area coordinators where appropriate, and in support of tenant commands, may establish a local ombudsman assembly for the purpose of providing information and support to area ombudsmen. The sponsoring command has the authority to determine makeup and membership of the assembly and should have a local assembly instruction to organize and guide the assembly.

Ombudsman Program Manager: Position at BUPERS (Pers-66) responsible to the Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personal Readiness and Community Support. The Ombudsman Program Manager is responsible for the administration of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

Ombudsman Training: Training is essential for the effective operation of the ombudsman program. Training and support for ombudsmen will be provided through the Family Services Centers and has been standardized to include: 1) Basic Training; 2) Advanced Training; and 3) Ongoing training. Information on ombudsman training is available in the Navy Family Ombudsman Manual (NAVPERS 15571A) and the Navy Family Ombudsman Training Guide.

Ongoing Training: See Ombudsman Training.

OPNAVINST 1750.1D: Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) Instruction (INST) that instructs the Navy on the purpose, application, and action required for the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.

OPTAR: Operating Target. An amount of funds issued to a command, subject to administrative control. OPTAR is derived from appropriated funds (see appropriated funds and non-appropriated funds).

OQMB: Ombudsman Quality Management Board. Established by OPNAVINST 1750.1D and made up of appropriate representatives from throughout the Navy family, the OQMB serves to advise BUPERS on suggestions to improve, standardize, and support the Navy Family Ombudsman Program worldwide.

PCS: Permanent Change Station. Relocation of military personnel from one permanent duty station to another. Certain financial entitlements are available to pay for the cost of relocation.

Pers-(Code #): The Bureau of Naval Personnel is divided into departments. Departments are further divided into divisions, branches, and sections. The Pers code identifies each separate department, division, branch, or section at BUPERS. Examples:

Pers-100: Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP)

Pers-6: The Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personal Readiness and Community Support (Department)

Pers-66: Personal, Family and Community Support Division

Pers-662: Command and Community Support Branch

(Pers-6 is the department, Pers-66 is the division, and Pers-662 is the branch in BUPERS that are responsible to the CNP for the management of the Navy Family Ombudsman Program.)

POC: Point of Contact. The military person (often the XO, CMC, or chaplain) appointed by the commanding officer as the intermediary for routine matters between the ombudsman program and the command.

POD: Plan of the Day. Schedule of the day's routine and events, ordered by a command's XO and published daily aboard a ship or shore activity.

Quarters: 1) Living spaces assigned to personnel aboard ship; 2) Government-owned housing assigned to personnel at shore stations; 3) assembly of personnel for drill, inspection, or meeting.

Scuttlebutt: 1) In the Navy, a drinking fountain is called a scuttlebutt. A scuttlebutt in old days was a cask with openings in the side, fitted with a spigot. 2) A rumor, from the fact that sailors used to congregate at the scuttlebutt or cask of water to gossip or report rumors, sometimes true, often not.

Sea Duty: Assignment to a ship whose primary mission is accomplished while underway from home port.

SELRES: Selected Reserve. Naval Reserves who are required to participate in active-duty training periods and annual training, and are paid for this duty.

SGLI: Servicemen Group Life Insurance. Life insurance coverage up to \$200,000 which can be purchased by a service member.

Social Roster: Distinctly different from the official command roster, the social roster consists of voluntary roster information gathered by the ombudsman or family support group. It can be shared and used by all who voluntarily choose to have their names and other information (e.g., address, phone number) included on the roster.

Sponsor Program: An official Navy program, belongings to each commanding officer, that assigns another service member—usually of equivalent rank/marital status—to help acquaint newly reporting service members and family with a new duty station.

TAD: Temporary Additional Duty. A period of time spent away from the permanent duty station on temporary official duty.

TAR: Training and Administration of Reserves. Reservists on full-time active duty solely to provide full-time support to the Naval Reserve.

Task Force/Battle Group: A temporary grouping of units/ships under one commander; formed for the purpose of carrying out a specific operation or mission.

UA: Unauthorized Absence. Being away from the unit without proper authorization.

XO: Executive Officer. Regardless of rank, the officer second in command of a Navy organization.

NAVAL ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARC/AMCROSS: American Red Cross
BAQ: Basic Allowance for Quarters
BAS: Basic Allowance for Subsistence
BEQ: Bachelor Enlisted Quarters
BOQ: Bachelor Officer Quarters
BUPERS: Bureau of Naval Personnel
CACO: Casualty Assistance Calls Officer
CAG: Carrier Air Wing (formerly Carrier Air Group)
CDO: Command Duty Officer
CHAMPUS: Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services
CHINFO: Chief of Information
CMC: Command Master Chief
CNO: Chief of Naval Operations
CNP/CHNAVPERS: Chief of Naval Personnel
CO: Commanding Officer
COLA: Cost of Living Allowance
COMRATS: Commuted Rations
CONUS: Continental United States
CPO: Chief Petty Officer
DEERS: Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System
DESRON: Destroyer Squadron
DOD: Department of Defense
DSN: Defense Switched Network
EAOS: End of Active Obligated Service
EMLV: Emergency Leave
IMARSAT: International Maritime Satellite Network
ISIC: Immediate Superior in Chain of Command
JAG: Judge Advocate General (lawyer)
LDO: Limited Duty Officer
MARS: Military Affiliate Radio Station
MCPON: Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
MTF: Medical Treatment Facility
MTT: Mobile Training Team
MWR: Morale, Welfare, and Recreation
NAF: Naval Air Facility
NAS: Naval Air Station
NAVFAC: Naval Facility
NAVSTA: Naval Station
NAVHOSP: Naval Hospital
NMC: Naval Medical Command
NMCRS: Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society
NSA: Naval Support Activity
NWA: Navy Wifeline Association
OCONUS: Outside Continental United States
OOD: Officer of the Day
OPNAV: Office of Chief of Naval Operations
OQMB: Ombudsman Quality Management Board
OSD: Office of Secretary of Defense
PAO: Public Affairs Officer
PCS: Permanent Change of Station

PHIBRON: Amphibious Squadron
PO: Petty Officer
PSD: Personnel Support Detachment
R & R: Return and Reunion
SECDEF: Secretary of the Defense
SECNAV: Secretary of the Navy
SELRES: Selected Reserve
SGLI: Servicemen's Group Life Insurance
SITREP: Situation Report
SUBRON: Submarine Squadron
TAD: Temporary Additional Duty
TAR: Training and Administration of Reserves
TLA: Temporary Lodging Allowance
TYCOM: Type Commander
UA: Unauthorized Absence
VHA: Variable Housing Allowance
WO/CWO: Warrant Officer/Chief Warrant Officer
XO: Executive Officer